

The Irish Catholic

MARY KENNY

Politics?...All up in the air...
Page 5



DAVID QUINN

Our MEPs have voted in favour of selling embryos Page 10



PAPAL PROBLEM

Pope a campaign issue in Argentina elections
Page 27



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Historic synod gathering 'big moment' for Church in Ireland to galvanise Faithful

Ruadhán Jones

The historic synod gathering in Rome which gets underway next week, being seen as the most significant Church gathering this century, is a "big moment" for the Church in Ireland to galvanise the Faithful to communicate "the richness of our tradition", Irish participants have said.

However, the Synod of Bishops on Synodality which begins on October 4, will not bear fruit unless it is felt in the "daily life" of Irish parishes, they added.

While some expect the gathering to push for change on hot button issues such as ordination of women to the priesthood, Bishop of Raphoe Alan McGuckian SJ insisted that the "power of the Church will be to stand on our tradition".

Rather than expecting change on "things of long-standing in the Church... it's about entering more deeply into our tradition" and communicating its "richness more effectively", Bishop McGuckian told The Irish Catholic ahead of departing for Rome this weekend.

"That is where I'd love our emphasis to be," he added.

The Bishop of Raphoe, along with Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy, will represent Ireland at the Synod of Bishops.

The gathering is a "very big moment" for the Church globally and in Ireland, Bishop McGuckian said.

Acknowledging the legacy of abuse in the Church in Ireland, the Donegal-based prelate said he hoped that the synod can help us "face up" to this sad reality.

» Continued on Page 2

Biker on the road to Christ...



Brendan Hassett of Tipperary of the Ramblers Motor Cycle Club, pauses after attending the Biker Remembrance Mass at Mount Melleray Abbey, Co. Waterford, on September 16. Photo: OSV News/Cillian Kelly.

NI sex ed causing anger - Nuala O'Loan

Jason Osborne

The failure to consult parents about new regulations on Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) in the North has caused "massive anger," according to Baroness Nuala O'Loan writing in this week's edition of *The Irish Catholic*.

Noting that education is a devolved matter for the Assembly, the former Police Ombudsman writes that when a law was introduced in Westminster in June without any prior consultation, providing that pupils must be made aware of abortion access, it provoked anger among the parents.

She described this as "typical of the contempt with which the government treats the people of the North now".

Encouraging parents to participate in the Department for Education's consultation on guidance and support material, Baroness O'Loan said that it "will give people an opportunity to challenge what has happened, to call for clear, unqualified parental rights to withdraw children and for the provision of information which really is clear, scientific and accurate".

See Page 8.

POPE IN MARSEILLE

Focusing on migrants by the Mediterranean

PAGE 14-15



RUADHÁN JONES

Parishes need lay leaders doing more than 'Sunday service' PAGE 18



BLESSED YOUTH

Relics of Bl. Carlo Acutis visit Knock

PAGE 16-17



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Inside this week

TVRadio

Too much insult and not enough insight

Page 35



Foreign News

Woman arrested for silent prayer in UK receives police apology

Page 24



Fr Rolheiser

Surrendering to love

Page 33



Managing Editor: Michael Kelly, editor@irishcatholic.ie

Deputy Editor: Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

Multimedia Journalists: Ruadhán Jones, ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Jason Osborne, jason@irishcatholic.ie

Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874094

Accounts: accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874020

Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie

Shop: shop@irishcatholic.ie

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Community support is vital to grieving process

“Get to know your parents, you never know when they'll be gone for good. Be nice to your siblings, they're your best link to your past. And the people most likely to stick with you in the future”. So wrote essayist Mary Schmich.

I buried my mother at the age of 65 four years ago this week, and my older brother Damian died last Wednesday at the age of 49 leaving a young family. Both suffered from cancer, neither being diagnosed until it was too late.

After my mother's death, a Jewish friend wrote to me and ended his note with the traditional Hebrew words to the grieving: *shelo ted'u od tza'ar* – may you know no more sorrow.

It's a beautiful wish, but also a forlorn one. The human condition is marked by joys and hopes, sorrows and despairs. To love at all involves the inevitability of some degree of pain.

The Belfast-born writer CS. Lewis knew this when he wrote: “to love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.”

And if, as Socrates famously said, “the unexamined life is not worth living” – surely the same is true for a life without love.

If we close ourselves off from the possibility of pain, by avoiding love we close ourselves off from God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ as love itself. A love that ultimately culminated



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



Michael with his late brother Damian.

in the victory over death on the Cross at Calvary.

There is a pattern to death in Ireland that I hope we never lose. Shortly after my brother breathed his last, the family home was soon filled with members of the extended family, friends and neighbours. Rosaries were said, cups of tea drank, a death notice prepared and planning for the wake began.

Damian's home is up a rural laneway, and the following morning nearby farmers were up early clearing the way and filling in potholes. Local men were soon erecting marquees and floodlights that would guide callers to the wake house. Their greeting was nothing more than a firm handshake and a gentle nod of the head with teary eyes, and yet their quiet work spoke more than any words.

The kitchen was soon a hive of activity as parishioners brought sandwiches, cakes, biscuits and pots of stew and soup. Again, few words were spoken and the rituals around a traditional wake soon took on a life of their own as people flowed through the door to offer their sympathies to Damian's wife Lorraine and his two brave boys Eoghan and Daithi.

The boys – aged seven and

ten – were comforted by the steady stream of their school friends with their parents. Many of the children had made drawings to give expression to their feelings of solidarity and sadness while others wrote gentle little notes.

The wake and funeral obsequies were a profound experience of a community wrapping itself around Lorraine and the boys – almost as if the burden of grief is too much for any one person or any one family to bear, but something that a parish community could find a way through together.

People travelled from every

part of Ireland and the UK for the wake and funeral, and seemed to put their lives and other concerns on hold to be there to share in the grieving process. The gentle rhythm of the liturgy gave voice to our silent prayers, and the decade of the rosary at the graveside seemed so appropriate since it was this prayer which gave Damian so much comfort in his final illness.

The local Drumragh GAA club, where both boys are players, was the most natural place in the world to continue the grieving process as we shared soup, sandwiches and more cups of tea reflecting on Damian's life, love and the huge void he will leave in all of our lives.

“Home,” the poet Robert Frost wrote, “is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in”. May our parishes never lose that sense of home that is such a source of comfort and strength in times good and bad.

Damian Michael Kelly RIP, (1974-2023).

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Historic synod gathering ‘big moment’ for Church in Ireland to galvanise Faithful

» Continued from Page 1

He also expressed a hope that the synod gathering “would galvanise us to live the Faith more deeply and effectively”.

Over 400 participants from across the world will participate at the October synod gathering. Bishop McGuckian said it will be a “wonderful experience” of the richness of the global Church and an opportunity

to draw from the wide-range of experiences of Catholics from “China, from Latin America and everywhere in between”.

However, the gathering will not bear fruit unless its effects are “felt in the daily life of dioceses, parishes and our religious communities”, according to Fr Eamonn Conway.

The priest of Tuam archdiocese, who is attending the synod as a specially selected

expert, said that the gathering is not about “particular issues first and foremost”.

“This is about how we embed practices of synodality in the daily life of the Church that promote participation, communion and mission,” he told *The Irish Catholic*.

Prof. Conway, Professor of Integral Human Development at Notre Dame Australia, said he hopes the assembly will make pos-

sible “sincere listening to one another and honest dialogue”.

In doing so, the participants “will be able to discern what God is asking of the Church at this time”.

Prof. Conway will be joined by Irish Sr Pat Murray IBVM who is the Executive Secretary of the UISG (International Union of Superiors General) which represents religious orders.

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Papal astronomer sees God in NASA success

Jason Osborne

Believers have been given the opportunity to find God “in the joy of discovery” and in the “elegance of the way that the Creator actually made this wonderful universe,” according to papal astronomer Bro. Guy Consolmagno SJ following NASA's successful Osiris-Rex mission.

NASA's first-ever samples of an asteroid in deep space landed safely on Earth in a historic first when a space capsule with samples of the asteroid Bennu taken by the agency's osiris-rex spacecraft in 2020 touched down on Saturday.

After traveling for over 6.2 billion kilometers to reach Bennu and then make the journey home, the osiris-rex probe released its sample containing some 250 grams of rocks and other material from Bennu, which scientists say could help answer some of our most serious questions about the origins of life on Earth and the early days of our solar system.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Bro. Consolmagno said that the success is important for a number of reasons.

“Understanding the asteroids and the asteroid belt is important not only for scientists who want to have some constraints on how we think the planets form, but it's also essential if you want to

exploit materials in space — ‘space mining’ — or if you want to know how to deflect an asteroid that's on a collision course with Earth,” he said.

“I am in love with the science behind these rocks,” Bro. Consolmagno said, adding, “what they are made from, how they are physically put together, and if the meteorites we get on Earth are ‘filtered’ by their passage from space and through our atmosphere”.

“Is what we've measured so far in meteorites really typical of material in space, or do only the odd rocks survive to reach the Earth?”

Asked about potential implications for faith if the sample reveals new discoveries regarding the origins of life on earth, Bro. Consolmagno said that all truth points us towards God.

“God is truth; so if you really want to get close to God you need to find the truth that's actually there, not the ‘truth’ we hope for or the ‘truth’ we are afraid of.

“So there's no particular result, for example regarding the origins of life, that would be ‘better’ or ‘worse’ for religion. Rather, no matter what we find, we'll find God regardless in the joy of discovery and the elegance of the way that the Creator actually made this wonderful universe,” he finished.



The sample return capsule from NASA's OSIRIS-REx mission is seen shortly after touching down in the desert, Sunday, September 24, at the US Department of Defence's Utah Test and Training Range. Photo: NASA/Keegan Barber

Bishops' Civil War pastoral letter caused 'hurt and anguish' – Archbishop Eamon

Ruadhán Jones

A 1922 pastoral letter from the Irish bishops caused “hurt and anguish” among families about the Irish Civil War, which has lasted down to today, Archbishop Eamon Martin has said.

Speaking at the annual conference of the Catholic Historical Society of Ireland, the Primate of All-Ireland said that the bishops' failure to “publicly speak out against extreme, and sometimes

merciless behaviour by the national government and its forces, has left a residual hurt which remains deeply felt by some people who are now in the late 80s and 90s”.

Dr Martin continued: “There is no doubt in my mind, however, that the bishops' pastoral letter of 1922 was exploited and distorted to excuse and provide moral justification for un-Christian, sinful and criminal behaviour”.

Citing the example of the controversial Legacy Bill, the Arch-

bishop of Armagh said it reminds us “that the wounds of an unresolved past – particularly a past which involves trauma and loss – almost always fester; they hamper the achievement of common purpose and shared endeavour in the present and for the future”.

“Addressing the legacy of the past is therefore critical to understanding the present and to building a reconciled future,” he told the large crowd gathered in the Seamus Heaney Lecture Theatre of Dublin City University on Saturday, September 23.

Ireland's love for Lourdes centre stage in new movie

Staff reporter

Hitting cinemas this week with an all-star cast, *The Miracle Club* follows a group of women from Dublin travelling to Lourdes on a pilgrimage.

Set in 1967, famous actresses Maggie Smith and Kathy Bates play best friends Lily (Smith) and Eileen (Bates) who are preparing to journey from Dublin to the sacred destination in the company of a third pal, Dolly (Agnes O'Casey).

The film has been commended by some reviewers for its faith-focus.

The latest offering from Irish director Thaddeus O'Sullivan, *The Miracle Club* appears in cinemas, Friday.



Laura Linney and Maggie Smith in a scene from *The Miracle Club* released by Sony Classics. Photo: OSV News

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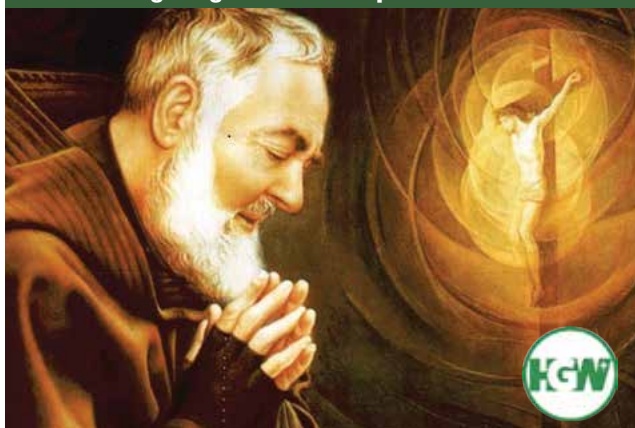
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Christians in the Holy Land must be free to worship without threat of violence or provocation – Tánaiste

Ruadhán Jones

Christians in the Holy Land must be free to worship without the threat of violence or provocation, the Tánaiste has said.

Tánaiste Micheál Martin's comments come after he met with the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem and visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which houses the tomb of Christ, during his visit to the region.

Mr Martin, who is also Minister for Foreign Affairs, told *The Irish Catholic* he is "concerned by the increasing acts of violence against Christians in the Old City of

Jerusalem".

He added that the "imposition of restrictions on non-Jewish religious ceremonies" is also concerning.

The Tánaiste discussed these issues with Patriarch Theophilos III and expressed Ireland's commitment to raising these issues at international fora.

Mr Martin told this paper that "Ireland – and indeed the EU and the UN Security Council – has been consistently clear in insisting that the status quo of the holy sites must be respected.

"Furthermore, peaceful worshippers must be

allowed to exercise their right to freedom of religion and worship freely and without threats, violence or provocation," he said in his statement.

Minister Martin met with Prime Minister Netanyahu, President Isaac Herzog – whose father was born in Belfast – and Foreign Minister Eli Cohen in Israel earlier this month.

He also met with President Mahmoud Abbas in the Occupied Palestinian Territory city of Ramallah.

The minister's comments come at a time of increased tensions in the Holy Land, with a spike of anti-Christian

harassment in Jerusalem.

Christian residents and pilgrims have reported being verbally abused and spat on, with priests, religious and laity targeted.

Earlier this year, the head of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land warned that "the frequency of these attacks, the aggressions, has become something new".

Latin Patriarch, Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, warned that "These people feel they are protected...that the cultural and political atmosphere now can justify, or tolerate, actions against Christians."

Bishop Router challenges men to profess their Catholic faith publicly again

Jason Osborne

Bishop Michael Router has warned that men have "slowly but surely slipped out of the picture," when it comes to promoting the Faith in Ireland.

For so long, Bishop Router said, professing faith was left solely to the women of Ireland.

"They have done a remarkable job, and we are indebted to the women in our life, and to the women in this society who have passed on the Faith to so

many people over the years, and done that quietly, within their families and schools, places of work.

"So we're very, very thankful to them," Bishop Router said.

"Unfortunately, men have slowly but surely slipped out of the picture. Because of that, faith is losing its grip in this society, and particularly in Ireland. All sorts of profanities and errors have entered into our society because men have stood back and have not professed their faith and have not shown

that Jesus Christ is their saviour."

Taking abortion as an example, he said: "Even though we're constantly told that it's a women's issue alone, abortion, why has that taken hold in our society? Why is it likely that over 10,000 children were aborted last year in this country? It is because men have stood back and have not spoken up, and have not said, 'This is an issue that belongs to me as well'. It's not just a women's issue. It is an issue for us all."

Killaloe diocese launches year-long vocations initiative

Staff reporter

The diocese of Killaloe has announced a year-long initiative to encourage young men to consider a vocation to the priesthood.

A multimedia promotional campaign across the counties of Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Offaly

and Laois is underway, to be followed up by parish visits.

While just over half of the diocese's 58 parishes have a resident priest, vocations director Fr Iggy McCormack is hopeful they can build on the three vocations during the past 12 months.

"The idea of young men taking up a vocation has

arguably become more countercultural in recent years, but we are very hopeful," he said.

Fr McCormack said the vocations initiative will encourage people to discover more about vocations on the diocesan website while the parish church visits are aimed at kickstarting

conversations within family groups, with local priests and in communities across the diocese.

Visit www.killaloediocese.ie or follow the Killaloe Diocese on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for more on the Year for Vocations to the Diocesan Priesthood.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Death of renowned languages scholar Msgr Brendan Devlin

The death of Msgr Brendan Devlin (93), a distinguished French and Irish language scholar, was announced on Wednesday, September 20.

Born in Rouskey, Co. Tyrone in 1931, Msgr Devlin served as Professor of Modern Languages at St Patrick's College Maynooth from 1958-96.

The prolific author and scholar wrote three novels in Irish, as well as translating the Catechism into Irish in 2001.

In his later retirement years, Msgr Devlin occupied himself by making key conciliar texts and recent magisterial documents available in Irish: *Lumen Gentium*; *Gaudium et Spes* and Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*; among others.

In the last few months, he translated two medieval Irish poems dedicated to Our Lady into the English language.

Saint of lost things Ireland's favourite

St Anthony of Padua, the patron saint of lost things, is Ireland's favourite saint, a poll conducted by the diocese of Kildare and Leighlin has revealed.

Following close on his heels were Irish saints, St Brigid and St Patrick, before three more international saints made the list: St Padre Pio, St Therese of Lisieux and St Martin de Porres.

"I think it's no surprise to anyone because everyone says a prayer to St Anthony when they lose something," said Fr David Vard of Stradbally on *Newstalk*.

Church leaders mark 25th anniversary of Good Friday Agreement in Rome

The Irish Church Leaders Group are in Rome this week to mark the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, which will be commemorated at an ecumenical prayer service.

With the support of the Irish and British embassies to the Holy See, leaders of a number of Christian denominations are attending the service, including: Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh John McDowell, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland Rev. David Turtle, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Dr Sam Mawhinney and Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe Andrew Forster.

Irish sisters leaving Rome after 140 years

The Mater Dei convent in Rome, famous for the Irish hospitality offered by the Irish Poor Servants of Mother of God, are preparing to leave Rome after almost 140 years of ministry of education.

A Mass of Thanksgiving and Farewell, was celebrated this week at Mater Dei Convent, Piazza di Spagna, by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, prefect of Propaganda Fide assisted by Pallotine Fr Rory Hanley from San Silvestro parish.

The Irish Ambassador to the Holy See, Her Excellency Frances Collins and large numbers of the English speaking community attended the Mass.

The sisters were famous for the welcome they gave to Irish seminarians and visitors.

Celebrating QUB chaplaincy's new home...



Members of Queen's University Belfast's Catholic chaplaincy community gather in their new home on 42 University Avenue to celebrate the first Mass of the new college year.

Politics?...all up in the air...

We have heard much, in recent times, about 'far-right' and 'far-left' tendencies in politics; but are these terms really meaningful in the modern age?

As everyone knows, they originate from the time of the 1789 French Revolution when deputies supporting the monarchy and the *ancien régime* sat on the right of the National Assembly, and those advocating revolution sat on the left.

In Ireland, I don't know anyone supporting a restored monarchy; nor have I encountered many voters preparing for a revolution. Most people have moved on from 1789 and embraced parliamentary democracy, which might include a range of political choices in a mix and match medley.

And mainstream Irish



Mary Kenny

politics since 1923 have never been straightforwardly left or right – the dominant parties have been an interweaving of policies.

In other countries, too, 'left' and 'right' have shifted positions radically. In Britain, the so-called left-wing party, Labour, now attracts more middle-class and affluent voters; while the so-called right-wing Tories have a strong appeal to the poorer voters in the neglected 'red wall' seats.

In America, the Democrats, the more 'left-wing' party which once had the support of the working class, is now home to the fashionable and the Hollywood smart folk.

Definitions of what is 'left' and 'right' have shifted in a cultural change. Being

'left-wing' used to mean supporting the working class, families and trade unions. Now it seems to mean being 'woke', waving a transgender flag and calling for abortion up to birth.

Yet there have always been shifts across the political spectrum. The fascist parties which arose in mid-20th Century drew from people of all backgrounds. Francis Beckett's autobiographical *Fascist in the Family* is one of the most poignant personal stories about this journey: the book traces how his father, John Beckett, who had been a left-wing member of Britain's Independent Labour Party, gradually came to embrace the fascism of Oswald Moseley. Circumstances – espe-

cially economic catastrophes – can nudge people in unexpected directions.

'Populism' is another phrase that is bandied about without any very clear definition. A third of Europe's political landscape is now said to be dominated by 'populists'. Does it mean leaders who are popularly elected, or – as sometimes suggested – a form of mob rule?

Commentators like to have labels with which they can neatly fit people into boxes. It's all very convenient. But rather than explaining the complications of political movements, these 1789 tags perpetuate clichés which really don't apply to our circumstances today.

Maybe 'progressive' and 'conservative' are more apt; except that some conservatives want progress, and some progressives want to keep things just as they are!

On Wednesday September 20, I made to turn into Dublin's Kildare Street from St Stephen's Green – with the intention of browsing at one of my favourite shops, Cleo, which specialises in beautifully crafted Irish tweeds and woollens. But I was halted on my route by the gardaí, who informed me that a demonstration outside Leinster House was expected.

Demonstration

So, I diverted to Dawson Street, where I asked a young woman in a black tee-shirt, equipped with a flag and various pieces of paper what the demonstration was all about. "Oh, it's about corruption in high places," she said, a bit vaguely, I thought. But she

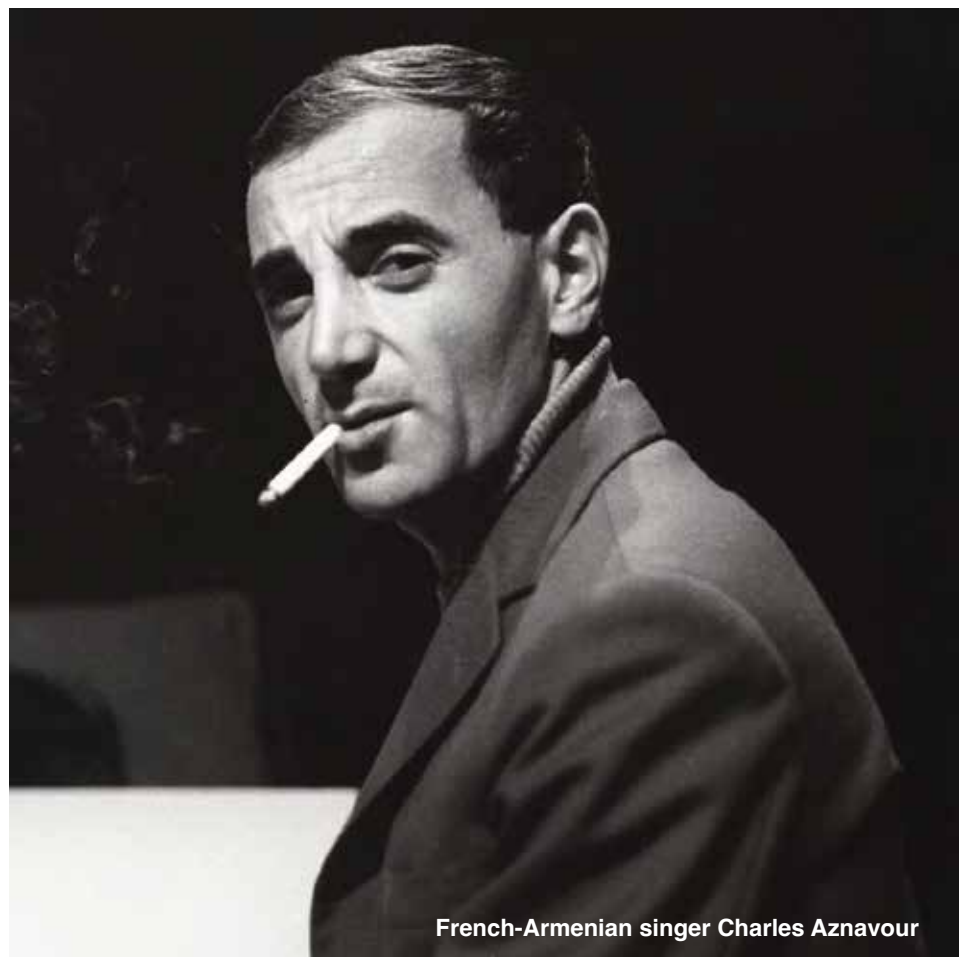
was pleasant and polite and not evidently of the thug-gish tendency subsequently reported around the event.

Protest

She then took out an ancient copy of the 1937 Constitution, written in the *cló Gaelach* – that attractive traditional Celtic script – and said this was the point of her own protest. That we should know about our Irish heritage and Bunreacht na hÉireann. She thanked me for enquiring.

Later, I learned about the deplorable and violent scenes from which deputies had to be protected, but this young woman seemed sincere and unthreatening. She urged me to consult her website: www.bunreacht1937.ie to learn more. Those interested may judge for themselves.

Armenia's closest ally...



French-Armenian singer Charles Aznavour

The troubles in the Azerbaijani enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh are repeatedly described in the press and media as 'ethnic conflicts' and attempts at 'ethnic cleansing'. But the historical difference between the Azerbaijan and Armenia is based on religion, and on territory, rather than "ethnicity". The Armenians are Christians;

the Azerbaijanis are Muslim. The Azerbaijanis look to the Turks and the Armenians feel more aligned with the wider Christian family, both Orthodox and Latin.

The French media has always taken a close interest in Armenia, and has been reporting the situation for some years. There has usually been a sense of solidarity with the Armenian people,

who suffered a terrible genocide in 1915, and have continued to live in fear in the disputed region. France has been a refuge for Armenians and one of their best-loved musical stars, Charles Aznavour, was from an Armenian family. He always underlined his Armenian heritage and brought awareness of the sufferings of the Armenian people.



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Northern pro-lifers defiant as exclusion zones confirmed

Jason Osborne

A prominent pro-life spokeswoman in Northern Ireland has struck a defiant tone as the date was confirmed for "Safe Access Zones" at abortion providers across Northern Ireland.

The exclusion zones come into effect September 29 and apply to a number of hospitals and centres across the

North, with the intention of deterring pro-life presence outside abortion providers' premises.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Director of Precious Life, Bernadette Smyth said that while they will need to be more "creative" with regards to their work and that they may have to do things differently, they're "not going away".

She also criticised what she perceives to be an inconsistency between the application of exclusion zones in England and Wales, and then with Northern Ireland.

"In early September, the UK home secretary Suella Braverman announced that silent prayer near abortion facilities is not a crime in the UK. That really encouraged us because she has written

to every police force in the country to clarify that silent prayer, in itself, is not unlawful," Ms Smyth said.

"I have written to my MP, Ian Paisley Jr, and I've asked for clarity regarding this statement by the home secretary. Does this apply to Northern Ireland?"

The enforcement of exclusion zones in Northern Ireland comes as Isabel

Vaughan-Spruce, a woman twice arrested for silent prayer outside UK abortion clinics, this week received a police apology and confirmation that she will not face charges for violating a local "buffer zone" protection order.

"So if she has clarified that as the home secretary, that in her opinion, silent prayer near abortion facilities is not

a crime, then that should apply to Northern Ireland, if we are part of the UK. This is something that we're really going to push," Ms Smyth said.

"We need clarity from our MPs, who represent the people of Northern Ireland, to really push for that clarity here, that we can continue, even if it's silent prayer."

Fire safety concerns see chapel closed at Roscommon hospital

Staff reporter

Sacred Heart Hospital in Roscommon has been forced to shut the doors to its chapel after a HIQA inspection found "poor practice" in the area of fire safety there.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Independent TD for Roscommon-Galway Michael Fitzmaurice said that his understanding was that the choice facing

the hospital was that they either "close the Church and be able to take more patients into the Sacred Heart home, or if they didn't do that, then they wouldn't be able to proceed".

Mr Fitzmaurice said that a quote regarding the cost of the necessary upgrades revealed a price tag of between €200,000 and €250,000.

Earlier this week, Mr

Fitzmaurice asked Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly whether "the Sacred Heart Hospital can now return to the admission of new patients in view of the closure of the church in the facility which had been the reason for no intake of patients".

Minister Donnelly referred the question on to the HSE.

Speculation of merger 'rife' in Mary Immaculate College

Ruadhán Jones

Speculation that Mary Immaculate College (MIC) could merge with University of Limerick (UL) is "rife" among staff, sources have told *The Irish Catholic*.

The speculation comes after President Eugene Wall announced his retirement at the end of the forthcoming academic year in an email to staff.

Prof. Wall's five year tenure comes to an end as he nears the age of 70, at which retirement is mandatory in public bodies.

In an email to staff sent on September 11, the president said: "It is with mixed emotions I write this 'welcome back' email, signifying as it does my last such one as president of MIC, as I will be retiring at the

end of this academic year."

Despite Prof. Wall's announcement, MIC has given no indication that it is seeking a new president thus far, this paper understands.

The lack of communication with staff has left many feeling "uneasy", leading to speculation about the future of the college at a time when it is exploring "closer structural alignment" with UL.

One source suggested that if no new president is appointed, staff believe that a merger is almost certain. If a president is appointed, it would suggest that no change in the college's status is imminent, the source said.

Bishop Brendan Leahy, chair of MIC's governing authority, has previously told this paper that a merger is not on the cards, although talks with UL are ongoing.

Mission Coordinator at Holy Family Mission

Holy Family Mission is a residential Catholic community for young people aged 18-30 who desire to grow in their faith and share this with others. Holy Family Mission is based in Glencomeragh House, Co. Tipperary and offers a formation programme to those who commit for the year. HFM works under the auspices of the Catholic Diocese of Waterford & Lismore and more details about its mission can be found by visiting www.holyfamilymission.ie.

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A detailed job description is available by contacting us at info@holyfamilymission.ie

Essential requirements:

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- Full driver's license
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Garda Vetting will apply in respect of this position.

In the Net...



Sienna Moore, Malia Kenner and Sarah McPhee of the NET Ministries Ireland Road Team are pictured after the missionaries' commissioning Mass, celebrated by Bishop emeritus Philip Boyce OCD.

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Nuala O'Loan

The View



British government treats the people of the North with utter contempt

Many parents have spoken to me recently about their anger at the new regulations on Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) in Northern Ireland.

Education is a devolved matter for the Assembly, but a law was introduced in Westminster in June without any prior consultation, providing that pupils aged 11-16 must receive "age appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion".

There has been massive anger at the failure to consult. A parliamentary scrutiny committee which received representations from bodies including all the Churches, the Catholic Schools' Trustee Service, the Controlled Schools' Support Council, Right to Life UK, the Christian Institute and the Transferor Representatives' Council was very critical of the British government. The Northern Ireland Office said that it was "under no obligation to consult". This is typical of the contempt with which the government treats the people of the North now.

Human rights

Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights states that: "the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions". This has not happened.

Government has said that "providing such information would not affect the ability of parents to provide advice and guidance to their children in keeping with their religious and philosophical views, which we all respect". However, "providing advice and guidance" is very different from "ensuring that such education and teaching is in conformity".

The English system is much more flexible than that imposed on the North.

Guidance on RSE in England provides that "schools will have flexibility over how they deliver these subjects, so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensi-

tive to the needs of the local community; and, as now, faith schools will continue to be able to teach in accordance with the tenets of their faith". and that provision for RSE is set, 'within the context of a school's broader ethos and approach to developing pupils socially, morally, spiritually and culturally and its pastoral care system'.

What happens now will be critical to how Northern Ireland's children are taught about issues such as abortion. The Department for Education (NI) is consulting on guidance and support material to be issued by January 2024, to "ensure that pupils receive such education".

Boards of governors and school principals will have to "have regard" to guidance.

This consultation (see below) is an opportunity to influence the content of the guidance and the associated material.

The consultation is very flawed. It comprises just four statements inviting one of three responses: agree, disagree or neither agree nor disagree. There is, importantly, opportunity to make further comment.

Statement 1

Statement 1 refers to the content of the guidance which is to be issued by the department:

"The content of teaching and learning resources for 'learning for life and work' developed by CCEA [Council for Curriculum, Examination and Assessment] should be factual and contain age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion and these resources should not advocate, or oppose, a particular view on the moral and ethical considerations of abortion or contraception".

There is, however, no fundamental agreement as to what is scientifically accurate education on contraception and abortion. Will such education include the fact that many contraceptive devices work by preventing the implantation of a pregnancy or by ensuring that it is aborted at an early stage of the pregnancy? Abortion



is the deliberate termination of the life of an unborn child. Will scientific information, such as this be included in any education materials?

“The Department’s guidance, when developed, should consider in such instances how schools balance the rights of both children and parents/carers in implementing the regulations”

Moreover it does not give effect to the fact that under the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, "the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth". Abortion is a complete denial of the right to protection before birth.

The remaining three statements refer to the option parents will have to withdraw children from lessons involving contraception and access to abortion.

Statement 2

"Parents/carers should be informed about the specific nature and content of the age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion".

Statement 3

"The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child includes at Articles 1-3 and 12 the rights of the child to 'express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously' and at Article 5 'the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers to provide guidance and direction to their child as they grow up so that they fully enjoy their rights. This must be done in a way that recognises the child's increasing capacity to make their own choices.' The Department's guidance, when developed, should consider in such instances how schools balance the rights of both children and parents/carers in implementing the regulations".

Statement 4

"Pupils and parents/carers should have access to an

overview of their school's RSE policy and planned RSE programme".

These questions do not permit the parent or carer any input into the specific information which is to be provided to their children. They suggest only access to an overview of their school's RSE policy and programme though full information would be obtainable under the Freedom of Information Act. These questions are all very loaded. They do not really constitute consultation.

There is no reference to ethical, moral or even spiritual matters, although under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights". They do not refer to the child's "right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion" (Article 14) or to Article 16, which prevents "interference with his or her privacy, family, home...".

They do not refer to the fact: "that every child has the inherent right to life". (Article 6 1.) and that states must "ensure to the maximum extent possible the ... development of the child".

Parents

Article 5 actually says that: "States parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community... legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights...".

Responding to this consultation will give people an opportunity to challenge what has happened, to call for clear, unqualified parental rights to withdraw children and for the provision of information which really is clear, scientific and accurate. The system in England enables schools to deliver a balanced curriculum in accordance with their spiritual and moral values. That is what Northern Ireland deserves.

The consultation runs until November 24. To respond email: rseresponses@education-ni.gov.uk or write to: Curriculum Team, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Bangor, Co. Down, BT19 7PR.



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Our MEPs have voted in favour of the sale of embryos



Too many of our laws are passed by the EU, with little more than a rubber stamp, writes **David Quinn**

Do you know anything about the voting record of your MEP, or what they get up to generally in Brussels or Strasbourg? The answer is, probably not. I don't. I pay far more attention to Irish politics than I do to what going on in the European Parliament and other EU institutions and I suspect it is the same for the vast majority of people not just in Ireland, but across Europe.

This is what is often called the 'democratic deficit', or part of it anyway. A properly-functioning democracy has a high level of interaction between voters and politicians. We keep an eye on what politicians are doing and we try to hold them accountable. The media play an important role here. They ask them questions on our behalf (even if they don't always do it properly), and they report to the public on what they are up to.

But for every ten stories you see in the papers about Irish politics, do you see even one about what is going on in the EU? How often are Irish MEPs asked about their voting record by Irish journalists? These days, Irish newspapers generally don't have the money for full-time Brussels correspondents. RTE has one and so does *The Irish Times*, and that's about it.

This isn't healthy. An awful lot of our laws are passed by the EU, and when they finally come before the Oireachtas, it is really a rubber stamp exercise.

Anyway, what might interest readers of this newspaper,



and anyone who cares about the pro-life cause, is a vote that took place in the European Parliament a couple of weeks ago. To cut straight to the chase, MEPs voted by an overwhelming margin to allow the sale of human embryos.

One MEP

The only Irish MEP I could find who voted against the measure was Frances Fitzgerald, which surprised me, because she supported repeal of the 8th Amendment, but she may have had some other reason to vote against the proposed law because it is so wide-ranging.

“Thus, we have a trade in human beings facilitated and encouraged by the European Union. Does this seem like moral progress to you?”

The regulation that came before the parliament is called 'Substances of Human Origin' or 'SoHO' for short.

It deals with the sale of matter that comes from human beings like cells, blood plasma and tissues which are used by labs and pharmaceutical companies and so on.

Few people would have objected to any of this, but

at a later stage the proposed law was amended to explicitly include embryos, as if embryos are 'substances of human origin' rather than actual human beings, a critical difference that could be explained to a child.

The Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) expressed its concern about the SoHO regulation.

It reiterated the Church's support for human life from its beginning and then pointed out: "The SoHO regulation degrades unborn human life to a mere 'substance of human origin' [placing it] on the same level as skin cells or blood plasma without any sort of differentiation. Human subjects are thus [reduced to] mere objects in disregard of their inherent dignity."

The SoHO regulation also permits eugenics because it says that clinics should "achieve a high level of assurance that genetic conditions are not transmitted to recipients or offspring from medical assisted reproduction."

Screening

In other words, conditions like Down Syndrome should be screened for in advance and their carriers eliminated. This is what eugenics is; eliminating the 'unfit'.

The president of the European Federation of Catholic Family Associations (FAFCE)

asked: "Does the European Parliament want to promote eugenics?" The answer is clearly, yes.

“So far as the Irish State is concerned, unborn human beings have no moral significance whatsoever and so can be used without the slightest regard for their inherent worth and dignity”

The worst aspects of the regulation were included at committee stage by one of the parliament's most powerful bodies which comes under the heading 'ENVI'.

The committee covers areas like climate action, environment and health.

We can only imagine which lobby groups were pushing for the inclusion of embryos in the regulation. The pharmaceutical lobbyists are extremely powerful, and they would be eager for the EU to permit the sale of embryos to labs for research and other purposes.

The embryos will often be sold on by IVF clinics. The IVF process creates many embryos, but not all are

implanted in the wombs of their patients. Many never get used. What happens to those embryos? They either remain frozen indefinitely, or are destroyed, or get sold on, which is probably the preferred choice of the clinics because then they make more money from them.

Human trade

Thus, we have a trade in human beings facilitated and encouraged by the European Union. Does this seem like moral progress to you?

The regulation covers many other areas. For example, it bans the sale of human sperm. This is a good thing. But it permits the sale of human eggs, probably due to the fact that it is hard to extract eggs from a woman and women generally needs a big financial incentive to induce them to undergo the process. If the supply of eggs to fertility clinics dried up, so would a considerable portion of their business.

But clinics also want sperm to be available for sale. They want to commercialise all aspects of their business. They want to commodify gametes (sperm and eggs) and also human beings themselves. This is an industry that is hopelessly under-investigated and under-examined.

What will happen to the SoHO regulation now? It goes before the EU's Council of Ministers. This consists of

Government Ministers from the member states. Theoretically, the regulation could be amended here, but there will be no opposition from Ireland. The Irish State no longer believes in the right to life. In fact, it hasn't for a long time. The repeal of the 8th amendment only made this official.

So far as the Irish State is concerned, unborn human beings have no moral significance whatsoever and so can be used without the slightest regard for their inherent worth and dignity. They are mere 'things', to be valued only if someone values them but with no value in and of themselves independently of what anyone thinks of them.

Perhaps some member states will oppose SoHO at the Council of Ministers but probably not enough to stop it in its tracks.

Sorry saga

This whole sorry saga teaches us two things. The first is that most of us haven't a clue what either the EU or our MEPs get up to and this is thoroughly unhealthy from a democratic point of view.

The second is that the EU couldn't care less about the right to life. Unborn human beings are fit only to be used. This is what we learnt, or rather had confirmed, by the vote that took place in the European Parliament two weeks ago.








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Luis Carlos Araújo, a member of the Missionary Province of the Sacred Heart shares his experience as a missionary working in the Amazon region.



Luis Carlos Araújo, a member of the Missionary Province of the Sacred Heart shares his experience as a missionary working in the Amazon region.

Half Page

Mission Sunday 22

Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Beatification of Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice



The beatification of Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice, a member of the Missionary Province of the Sacred Heart, is celebrated on October 22nd.



The beatification of Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice, a member of the Missionary Province of the Sacred Heart, is celebrated on October 22nd.

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Parish celebrates 200 years of strong Christian witness

Ruadhán Jones

Over 600 Rathmines parishioners celebrated the parish's 200th anniversary on Saturday, September 17, with a Mass and reception in the Church of Mary Immaculate Refuge of Sinners.

Fr Andrew O'Sullivan, parish priest in Dublin, celebrated the anniversary Mass, which the parish spent months preparing for.

A number of museum and reliquary displays, including one exhibiting a relic of the True Cross, were renovated.

In addition, six large paintings gifted to the parish after the closing of Clonliffe College have been put on display on a permanent basis.

Rathmines Parish was established in 1823 under the direction of Fr William Stafford, its first parish priest. The parish has undergone significant change over its 200-year history, with its Byzantine-styled dome dominating the skyline of south Co. Dublin.

In his homily Fr O'Sullivan PP said: "This is God's house, and we have a sacred duty of care to look after it for the future generations and to ensure that the Parish of Rathmines remains a living, vibrant and pastoral Christian community."

"Our focus can never be solely on a building however, but rather on the living stones of this building which are the people of God," he added.

Participation in the celebrations came from all corners of the parish community with a special contribution from the children of St Louis Primary school who led the prayers of the Faithful and presented history projects on the historic church building.

The music was provided by the parish choir led by parish organist Mr John Hughes and included suitable music for the occasion including the Credo, Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei and Salve Regina all in Latin.

In conjunction with the bi-centenary of the parish, a relic of the True Cross, granted by the Archdiocese to the parish as custodians, was also unveiled and will remain on permanent display in Rathmines Church.



Fr Andrew O'Sullivan PP Rathmines parish cuts the 200th anniversary cake.



Fr O'Sullivan processes through the Church of Mary Immaculate Refuge of Sinners with a relic of the True Cross during Mass on September 17





A packed Rathmines parish centre for the reception after Mass to celebrate the parish's 200th anniversary.



Fr O'Sullivan doles out the special cake made to mark the anniversary.



Rathmines parish choir, led by John Hughes parish organist, provided musical accompaniment on the night. Pictured (from left) in the first row are Eoin McCormack (Parish Pastoral Worker), Carlos Wilker, Mary Hagerty, Irma Ó Cuív and John Hughes; in the second row are Roxana Pal, Eón Ó Cuív and Ann Marie Newman.



At 98, Annie from Glasnevin made it back to Rathmines Church for the 200th anniversary where she grew up and made her sacraments in the parish school. She is pictured with Fr O'Sullivan.

THE SYNODAL TIMES

**OCTOBER
2023 ISSUE**

For the October issue of The Synodal Times, we ask a wide range of Catholics what they want to see from the upcoming Synod of Bishops meeting. We also break down just exactly who will be in attendance at this all-important event in Rome.

The issue will also feature the big interview with Dr Myriam Wijlens on how 'Synodality also means accountability'. And finally, Professor Serena Noceti will enlighten readers on the topic of laypeople becoming members of a synodal Church.

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Focus on migration during Pope's time in Marseille



Carol Glatz

MARSEILLE, France – Pope Francis arrived in the ancient port city of Marseille September 22 for a two-day visit that was to focus on the plight of migrants and other opportunities and threats facing the Mediterranean Sea and the nations along its shores. It was his 44th apostolic journey abroad.

Riding in a wheelchair, he was greeted by French Prime Minister Élisabeth Borne and by four children and a young man who gave him flowers and other gifts.

He stood on the red carpet for the playing of the Vatican and French national anthems before he and Ms Borne went into the airport for a brief meeting.

Speaking to reporters flying with him, the Pope said the trip was meant to bring the world's attention to "a problem that worries me, which is the problem of the Mediterranean".

"The exploitation of migrants is criminal" as is their detention, he had told reporters in August, and "I am going to Marseille for this".

During the flight to Marseille, the Pope greeted each reporter individually and responded to comments and questions about the latest influx of migrants, who often travel in extremely unsafe and dire conditions, onto the Italian island of Lampedusa: "It is cruelty and a terrible lack of humanity," he said to one reporter.

"I hope I have the courage to say everything I have to say," he replied to another reporter's prompts about the situation in Lampedusa. A photojournalist gave him a photograph she took last week of a child arriving on the island of Lampedusa.

Pope Francis also spoke about how migrants are detained in north Africa "in lagers, they then throw them into the sea," he said, becoming visibly emotional.

The trip's main event was his speech September 23 to the "Mediterranean Meetings," which brought about 70 bishops and 60 young people



Pope Francis is welcomed by Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline of Marseille, France, and Fr Olivier Spinosa, rector of the Basilica of Notre-Dame de la Garde, as he arrives at the basilica for a Marian service with diocesan clergy, September 22. Photos: CNS/Lola Gomez

of all faiths from 30 countries surrounding the Mediterranean to dialogue together. Civil and other leaders also attended the weeklong meetings, which discussed social-economic issues, ecology, immigration and civil or political conflicts affecting the region at large.

The meetings' Catholic organisers, which include the Archdiocese of Marseille, hoped to bring all sides together to focus on concrete

ways to promote the common good, to see and respect the dignity of all human beings and to recognise everyone is part of one human family.

**Pope Francis:
People have a duty
to save migrants in
danger of drowning**

At a moving ceremony at the edge of a cliff overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, Pope Francis led a moment of

silence for the countless lives lost in its blue but treacherous waters.

And he warned the world it was now at a crossroads: people must choose either to take the path of compassion, encounter and fraternity or veer off toward a track of indifference and conflict.

Calling it "a duty of civilisation," he said that "people who are at risk of drowning when abandoned on the waves must be rescued. It is a

duty of humanity".

Dozens of guests, including the mayor of Marseille, Benoit Payan, who sat at the Pope's side, representatives of the city's religious communities, Church officials and organisations involved in the rescue, care and assistance of migrants joined Pope Francis for the moment of reflection.

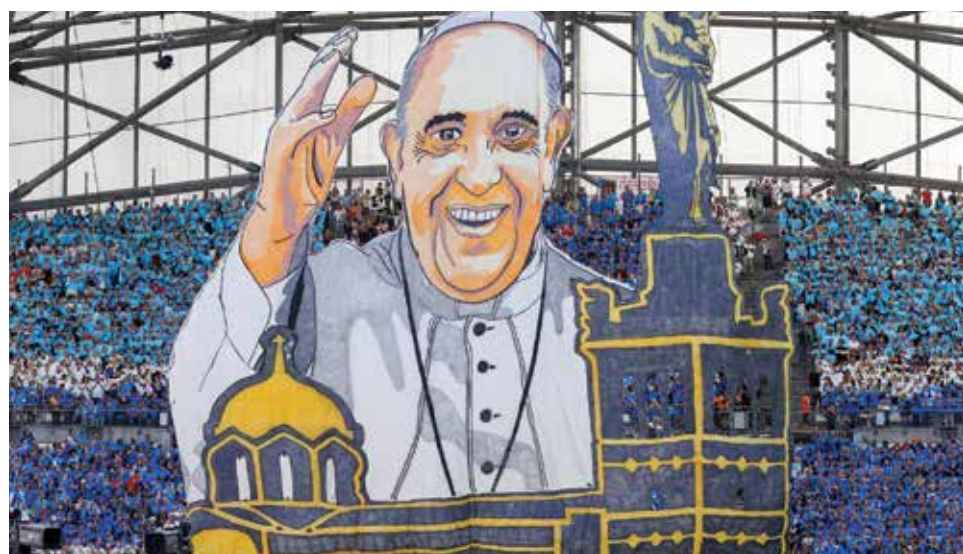
The Pope prayed and led a moment of silence with the others before going to a monument dedicated to those who have perished at sea. The monument, topped with a cross, also features a heart and an anchor. As the Pope

and religious leaders prayed, the sun was slowly setting toward the water below.

"Let us not get used to considering shipwrecks as news stories" where the people who died are faceless and nameless numbers, he said. They are brothers and sisters who "drowned in fear, along with the hopes they carried in their hearts".

"We need deeds not words," he said, and then led those gathered in a moment of silence in memory of those who died.

"Let us be moved by their tragedies," he said.



People display a *tifo*, a veil with Pope Francis' image, before his Mass at the Vélodrome Stadium in Marseille, France, September 23.



Pope Francis is welcomed by French President Emmanuel Macron as he arrives at the Pharo Palace for the closing session of the Mediterranean Meetings with bishops, civil leaders and young people in Marseille, France, September 23.



Pope Francis pauses before a memorial dedicated to sailors and migrants lost in the Mediterranean Sea in Marseille, France, September 22.

At this time in history, he said, following the path of fraternity will allow the human community to flourish, while the road of indifference “bloodies the Mediterranean”.

“We cannot be resigned to seeing human beings treated as bargaining chips, imprisoned and tortured in atrocious ways,” he said, blaming the countless shipwrecks on “cruel trafficking and the fanaticism of indifference”.

The Pope said religious leaders must show people the way and be exemplary in their offer of “mutual and fraternal welcome,” shunning the “woodworm of extremism and the ideological plague of fundamentalism that corrodes the authentic life of communities”.

He urged the people of Marseille, marked by religious pluralism, to choose well what path it will take, whether that of encounter or confrontation.

He praised those gathered with him who are dedicated to rescuing and assisting migrants at sea and in danger. He said he was well aware of efforts that try to block rescuers, and he called such actions “gestures of hatred against one’s brother,” calling for “balance”. Some governments have blocked non-governmental organisations from carrying out rescues because they claim they encourage people to attempt illegal crossings.

“Let us not cause hope to shipwreck; let us together make a mosaic of hope,” he said, before listening to several prayer intentions read aloud by those representing different facets dedicated to the care of sailors and migrants.

Earlier, the Pope joined bishops, clergy, seminarians and consecrated men and women for a Marian prayer

“We need a jolt of conscience to say ‘no’ to lawlessness and ‘yes’ to solidarity”

service in the Basilica of Notre Dame de la Gard situated on top of the hill overlooking the sea and the memorial.

The Pope encouraged Catholics to be like Mary, the *Bonne Mère* depicted in the basilica’s statues, with her tender and loving gaze on Jesus, who, in turn, compassionately looks upon all of humanity.

Jesus looks at people, not to judge, but to lift them up, especially those who are “lowly” or lost and to help bring them back to the fold, he said.

“May people wounded by life find a safe harbour in your gaze, encouragement in your embrace and a caress in your hands,” he said.

“Do not detract from the warmth of God’s paternal and maternal gaze,” he said, urging priests to “always, always loosen the chains of sin through grace and free people from those obstacles, regrets, grudges, and fears against which they cannot prevail alone”.

Pope laments closing ports to migrants, fuelling fears with false alarm

The real evil plaguing communities and countries is not the growing number of problems, but the collapse of care, Pope Francis said at a major meeting discussing the challenges and opportunities of the dozens of countries circling the Mediterranean Sea.

“Today the sea of human coexistence is polluted by instability, which even assails beautiful Marseille,” he said September 23, on the second and final day of his trip to the ancient port city.

“Where there is instability there is crime. Where there is lack of work together with material, educational, cultural and religious poverty, the path is opened up for gangs and illicit trafficking.”

It is not enough for institutions to make a commitment to resolving the problem, the Pope said.

“We need a jolt of conscience to say ‘no’ to lawlessness and ‘yes’ to solidarity,” he told his audience, which included French President Emmanuel Macron, Marseille Mayor Benoît Payan, and most of the French bishops as well as dozens of bishops, young people of all faiths and civil association leaders from about 30 Mediterranean nations.

He was met with a standing ovation when he came onto the stage to join other Church leaders.

During Mass in Marseille, Pope urges Church and world to ‘take leap of faith’ and love

The world and the Catholic Church today need to take a leap forward “in faith, charity and hope,” Pope Francis said in his homily at a late afternoon Mass in Marseille’s

open-air stadium.

“We need to rekindle our passion and enthusiasm, to reawaken our desire to commit ourselves to fraternity. We need to once again risk loving our families and dare to love the weakest, and to rediscover in the Gospel the transforming grace that makes life beautiful,” he said at the final event of a two-day trip to the old port city of Marseille.

Passion and enthusiasm were not lacking at the Vélodrome Stadium, which erupted into cheers the minute images hit the screens of Pope Francis making his way through the city in the pop-emobile. Officials estimated 100,000 people lined the route to the stadium while some 50,000 people nearly filled the stadium. French President Emmanuel Macron, Marseille Mayor Benoît Payan and other dignitaries were present.

People chanted *Papa Francesco* and repeatedly executed “the wave” to immense cheers. One section, filled with people wearing blue sports bibs, added to the ocean effect. Then in a well-coordinated pull, volunteers hoisted an immense veil-like cut-out image of a waving Pope and the belltower of the city’s Basilica of Notre Dame de la Garde. They also held up gold cards to spell out *Merçi* (Thank you) against the blue background.

While the Pope’s September 22-23 trip focused on the plight of migrants and the world’s responsibility to res-

cue those in danger, to create more equitable legal channels for migration, to amend gross economic disparities and promote peace, he also reminded Catholics of their mission to share Christ’s compassion and hope.

In his homily September 23, he asked the Faithful to reflect “honestly, from the heart: Do we believe that God is at work in our lives? Do we believe that the Lord, in hidden and often unpredictable ways, acts in history, performs wonders and is working even in our societies that are marked by worldly secularism and a certain religious indifference?”

In a world with so many challenges, he said, people of faith must have trust in the Lord.

At the end of the Mass, the Pope thanked those who travelled from different parts of France. A group from Nice, accompanied by their bishop and mayor, was made up of survivors of a 2016 terrorist attack when a 19-ton truck drove into people promenading on a holiday evening, leaving 86 people dead and 434 other injured.

“I recall the terrible attack,” the Pope said, asking people to “prayerfully remember all those who lost their lives in that tragedy, as well as in all the terrorist acts that have been perpetrated in France and in every part of the world”.

“Terrorism is cowardly,” he added.

Migrants must not be sent back to cruel traffickers, Pope says

Because so many migrants’ journeys and lives are in the hands of cruel traffickers, countries of destination cannot send them back to where they embarked like a game of “ping pong,” Pope Francis told reporters September 23.

“Migrants are to be

received, accompanied, promoted and integrated,” he said, and if the host country is unable to take them in, then “accompany them” in being integrated in a dignified way in their country of origin so they will not end back up in the hands of these “wretches,” the gangs and traffickers.

The Pope answered just a few questions on the short flight back to Rome from Marseille, France, where he spent two days highlighting the plight of migrants who seek passage to Europe across the Mediterranean Sea and the region’s responsibility and opportunities to find solutions.

Asked if he felt his urgent appeals for protecting the lives and dignity of these men, women and children over the span of his 10-year pontificate have failed, Pope Francis said he believed that there is greater awareness now of the seriousness of their plight than before, but that this growing awareness has been slow.

Instead, what it is happening, he said, is countries are treating the problem like “a hot potato that they don’t know how to handle”.

So, it ends up like a game of ping pong, he said, with migrants going back and forth between the hands of ruthless traffickers and the European shores that reject them at the border.

Often migrants end up in “lagers” where their lives are worse off than before, he said. “We can’t send them back” without seeing or understanding what will happen to them. We have to be careful and do something.”

Helping these people in need “is good for us,” he said. “It makes us more human and more divine.”

i Carol Glatz is senior correspondent with OSV News.

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Tea and light refreshments served



Relics of ‘model for the young’ Blessed Carlo Acutis visit Knock

Ruadhán Jones

The relics of Blessed Carlo Acutis, described by Pope Francis as a “model for the young”, drew thousands to Knock Shrine for Mass and veneration.

Principal celebrant at Mass was the bishop of Blessed Acutis’ hometown of Assisi, Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino, who along with Msgr Anthony Figueiredo accompanied the young man’s relics on a tour of Ireland.

Blessed Carlo was born in London to Italian parents, but grew up in Milan where his family relocated when he was just a child.

From a young age, he displayed an extraordinary devotion to his Catholic faith and attended Mass daily, regularly received the sacraments as well as developing a deep love for the Eucharist.

On October 10, 2020, he was beatified by Pope Francis, becoming the first millennial to be declared ‘Blessed’ by the Catholic Church.



Archbishop Sorrentino and Msgr Figueiredo process into Knock Basilica.



Sean Gunning from Tuam receives a blessing with the relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis.



A pilgrim receives a blessing with the relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis from Msgr Anthony Figueiredo at Knock Shrine. Photos: Sinead Mallee.



Fr Jared Suire and Fr Mark Ledoux, Diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana, USA, venerate the relic.



Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino celebrates Mass in Knock Basilica.



Msgr Figueiredo with the relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis at Knock Shrine.



Large crowds queue to venerate the relics of Blessed Carlo Acutis.



Eric Bates and Sean Hassett from Tipperary at the relics of Blessed Carlo.



Jamie Webb venerates Blessed Acutis' relic.



Margaret Jennings from Knock with her daughter Mary venerate the relic.



A young child venerates Blessed Acutis's relic in Knock Basilica on September 15.

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Parishes need lay leaders doing more than 'Sunday service'



We must be careful to avoid turning laity into mini-priests, writes **Ruadhán Jones**

We reported last week that dioceses are pushing ahead with lay-led funerals, a move that is welcome in some respects and a sign of painful decline in others.

The painful decline in the number of vocations to the priesthood is an ongoing cause for concern. It stretches thin those who do take up the call and it bears repeating that we have no Church without our priests.

Lay assistance

But it is welcome news to see so many lay leaders stepping forward to assist overburdened priests with their ministry. Funeral ministry can be tough work, spiritually and psychologically. It requires pastoral care before, during and after, as well as the liturgical aspects.

“Mass celebrated together on a Sunday should be the source and summit of our life as a Christian community”

These parishioners being trained in Down and Connor and Clogher are taking on one of the great corporal works of mercy – burying the dead – and will also no doubt play a vital role in comforting the bereaved.

As Dr Gary Carville told this paper last week, Clogher's move is just one part of Bishop Larry Duffy's desire to get the laity more involved in Church life in the diocese, including some liturgical ministry.

The bishop's drive comes at a time when Pope Francis is pushing for a renewal for lay ministries such as the instituted lector, acolyte and catechist. All of these are hopeful signs that the real 'Spirit of Vatican II' is being put into practice, encouraging parishioners to take up their Baptismal call to serve Christ.

Challenge

But these signs, and this call, also lay down a challenge to do more than slot the laity in where priests once



“This will require more than mini-priests – it will require laity fully engaged with their Baptismal call, sharing everything that they own”

were in order to preserve the status quo. For some it seems the only way to become a lay leader is to be like a priest, with many looking at Church reform in those terms.

For instance, a common theme emerging from many synod meetings was that we need to make the Church more welcoming. But the proposals typically revolved around ordaining women to the priesthood, relaxing rules around reception of the Eucharist and so on.

These proposals miss the mark to my mind, perpetuating a kind of clerical thinking Pope Francis wants to overthrow. We must go beyond maintenance of the present model to something more ambitious, which will require laity renewing the parish as a family of families, a true Christian community.

Unified in love

As it stands, much of the focus in parishes is on the Sunday Mass, when you will see the vast majority of people attending church. As a football match is to a footballer, Mass is to the Christian; it is where we gather to mark ourselves out as brothers and sisters in Christ, unified in love of him.

Mass celebrated together on a Sunday should be the source and summit of our life as a Christian

community; but a true renewal will only come about when we recognise that we are members of the parish family six other days of the week as well.

To truly make the Church a place of welcome, we need parishioners who will lead a recovery of the parish as a hub of social, intellectual, emotional as well as spiritual nourishment.

If we want any inspiration we only have to look to the example of the Catholic chaplaincies in our midst who minister to expatriate communities such as the Brazilian, Filipino, Ukrainian, African and others.

What marks these communities out is that, being cut off from the support of their families, they engage with their parishes as a family of faith.

Parish hub

Sodalities, fraternities, apostolates, prayer groups, pilgrimages, social outings, sacramental preparation, the sacraments themselves; the parish becomes a hub for all of these, combining the spiritual and the fraternal in a beautiful recreation of the early Christian experience.

“The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything



Many of our chaplaincies, like Ireland's Ukrainian Catholic chaplaincy, exemplify lively parish life.

that he had, as everything they owned was held in common” is how the early Christian communities are described in Acts 4:32.

While our minds might turn immediately to the economic significance of that vision, “everything” is more encompassing than that. It means making the parish a vision of the healthy family which Sr Briege last week predicted would produce vocations, sharing

in the joy and the suffering of our brothers, sharing in their talents and weaknesses.

To do this will require more than mini-priests – it will require laity fully engaged with their Baptismal call, sharing everything that they own. Once we engage in this work with all our energy, we can more fully engage with the Mass, coming to be refreshed at the fountain of God's love and mercy.

Out&About

High achievers in high spirits



KERRY: Mercy Mounthawk Secondary School Tralee's high achievers in the Leaving Certificate meet the Minister of Education Norma Foley TD. Pictured (from left) are Aoife O'Rourke, Qintar Aneed, Lucy Kingston, Minister Foley, Roisa O'Donnell and Choitee Chakrabort. Photo: John Cleary.



DUBLIN: Dr Hannah Vaughan-Spruce of Divine Renovation UK, keynote speaker at the Dominican Friars' Provincial Assembly in St Mary's Priory, Tallaght, on Monday, September 11, is pictured with Fr Maurice Colgan OP and Fr Conor McDonough OP. Photo: Bro. Sean Blackwell OP.



MAYO: Some of the Irish Capuchin Friars are pictured outside the Friary in Knock, which officially opened on Sunday, September 17. Pictured (from left) are Bro. Patrick Flynn, Bro. Terence Harrington, Bro. John Wright (guardian), Provincial Minister Bro. Seán Kelly, Fr Richard Gibbons PP and Rector of Knock Shrine, Bro. Matthew Clerkin and Bro. Dermot Lynch.

IN SHORT

We all share blame for road accidents – bishop

All road users must accept their “collective responsibility” for road traffic accidents, Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan has said.

His comments come in the wake of a spate of deaths and injuries resulting from collisions and accidents on Irish roads.

After our immediate reaction to the heart-breaking news of a serious road accident, “our analysis may move on to where to apportion blame”, Bishop Monahan said in a statement.

However, he warned that “the so called ‘blame game’ is a futile exercise if we do not

take our own particular share in the blame for all accidents”. “Yes, our collective responsibility,” he continued. “Our taking a share of blame arising from a collision that we are not involved in may seem to be an outrageous statement, but this represents our shared reality.

“It points to the core of all good driving habits, namely personal responsibility.

“It is about you and me, as individual drivers and our standard of road safety that we practice.”

Bishop Monahan pleaded with all drivers to ask themselves three questions; am I a careful road user, do I think of other road users and do I ensure a high standard of road use that serves the common good.

Loreto secondary school reveals ambitious plans

The Board of Management of Loreto Secondary School Bray has applied to Wicklow County Council for the proposed redevelopment of the school, to provide a new 1,000-student capacity school and attendant grounds to the south of the campus.

It is intended the works will be undertaken in phases.

The school's plans include replacing the existing single storey structure with a new part two-storey and part three-storey secondary school on the site of the existing

campus.

The total anticipated area of the new buildings is 11,302 square metres, including a new sports hall and special educational needs (SEN) unit.

A construction phasing and execution plan will be developed to facilitate a safe working environment for construction workers, staff, pupils and visitors to the school.

It is proposed that a temporary site entrance will be opened off Vevay Road to provide a dedicated site entrance for construction traffic.

The closing date for submissions is Wednesday, October 11 with a decision due on Wednesday, November 1.

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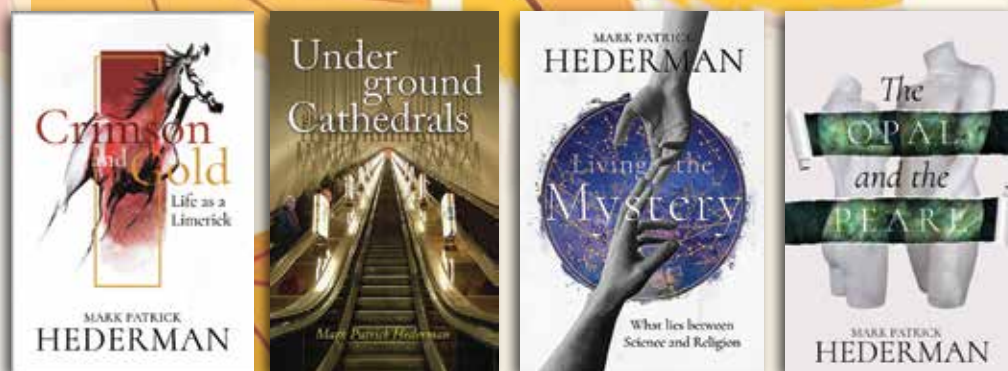
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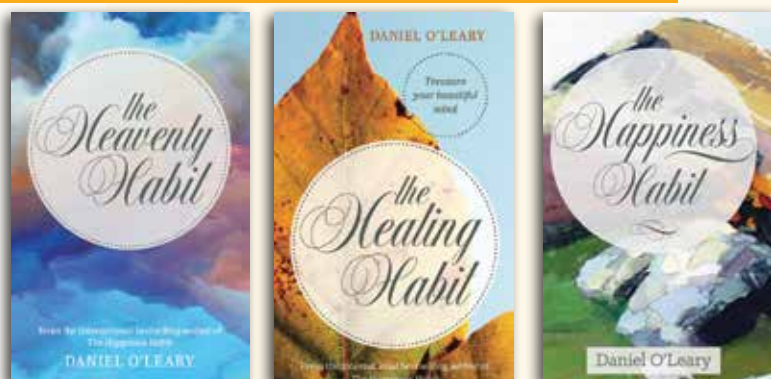
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KERRY: Bro. Philip McMahon OFM, from Navan, is pictured making his Solemn Profession in the Franciscan Friary, Killarney on September 17. Aidan McGrath OFM, Minister Provincial, who received his vows, was himself celebrating his Golden Jubilee of Profession on the same day, the Feast of the Stigmata of St Francis.



GALWAY: The congregation who attended the St Grelan's Mass at Tobergrellan well on the eve of the saint's feast day are pictured after Mass.



GALWAY: On September 17, the Eve of the feast day of St Grelan, patron of Hymany, an outdoor Mass was celebrated by Fr John Garvey and Fr Charles Nyaneh at the saint's holy well in Tobergrellan, Ballinasloe, diocese of Clonfert. St Grelan was a student and companion of Saint Patrick and founded his church in Kilcloony.



KERRY: Attending Mass at Our Lady's Well and Grotto at Ballyheigue on Our Lady's birthday on September 8 are Caroline Kenny, Hayley and Cora Clifford, Ballyheigue, Shauna Kenny and Margaret Kenny, Ballyheigue. Photos: John Cleary.



KERRY: Mass was celebrated by Bishop of Kerry Ray Browne at Our Lady's Well and Grotto, Ballyheigue on Friday, September 8 in honour of Our Lady's birthday, where approximately 2,000 people attended. Pictured (from left): Fr Pat Crean-Lynch, Fr Brendan Walsh, Fr Jerry Keane, Fr Amos Surungai Ruto, Fr Mario Jachym, Bishop Browne, Fr Tom Leane, Fr Ned Barrett, Fr John Healy and Fr Denis Casey.



LAOIS: Bishop Denis Nulty offers a warm welcome at the Kildare and Leighlin Stand at the National Ploughing Championships in Ratheniska on September 19.



LAOIS: The Kildare and Leighlin stand receives help from visitors from Limerick and Tipperary to make St Brigid's cloak.



LAOIS: Members of Irish religious orders promote vocations at the National Ploughing Championships on September 19.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



LONDON: Knights and Dames of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, including from Ireland, attended Mass at Westminster Cathedral, London on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross on Thursday, September 14. Bishop Nicholas Hudson KC*HS, Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster Diocese was the principal celebrant. He is pictured with Msgr James Curry KCHS (Westminster); Thomas Kilduff KC*HS (Cavan); Dr Stephen Dorgan GCHS (Dublin) and Ralph Harrison, KCHS (Westminster).



LIMERICK: A group of 16 who took their first promise in lay Carmelite formation on September 2 are pictured with spiritual director Fr Vincent O'Hara OCD.



ITALY: Fr Michael Toomey led a pilgrimage to Padua recently. Thousands of petitions were prayed for and left at the Tomb of St Anthony in Padua. Many of these came from people who regularly join him for Mass on RTE News on Monday mornings.



CORK: Ruadhán and Kiley Jones are pictured after the Baptism of their daughter Caitriona with Fr Micheál O'Loinsigh PP Grenagh and Courtbrack in the Church of St Joseph, Courtbrack on Sunday, September 10.

ANTRIM

Beginning experience is offering a programme of bereavement support in St Bride's Hall, Derryvolgie Ave., Belfast on three Saturdays, September 30, October 28 and November 25. Booking essential. Contact Marie at belfastbe@yahoo.com.

CAVAN

Cavan Town Mens Shed meet at rear of Cana House, Farnham St. Monday, Wednesday & Friday 10am – 1pm. New members always welcome.

CLARE

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place daily 3-7pm, with Benediction and evening prayer at 5.30pm on Sundays in the Poor Clare's oratory.

CORK

Vocations weekend October 28-29 for the Adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of Montmartre, Order of St Benedict. Takes place in St Benedict's Priory, Cobh. Contact cobhtyburnconvent@gmail.com.

DONEGAL

Rosary on the coast for world peace and the protection of unborn babies takes place at Lisfannon Beach, Buncrana, on the first Sunday of every month at 3pm, and at Benone Strand on the third Sunday of every month, at 3pm.

DOWN

Lectio Divina in Newry Cathedral has restarted after the summer break and takes place in the Parish Centre on Thursday after 10.30am Mass, usually getting underway by 11.15am.

DUBLIN

Dublin Bay North young group to host an 11-week Alpha programme to explore the Christian faith every Thursday from 7.30-9pm in St Anthony's House behind St Anthony's Church, beginning September 28. Contact parishyouthgroup@gmail.com for more information.

Free day long conference for 18-35 year-olds titled 'Catholics in a Woke World' takes place on Saturday, October 7 from 10am-4.30pm in the Iona Institute. To book, contact

info@ionainstitute.ie.

FERMANAGH

Holy Cross Lisnaskea to host an international Mass on October 1 at 11am. If you would like to play a role in the celebration, contact 028 677 21088.

A novena Mass to St Peregrine, patron of those who have cancer, is celebrated every Tuesday at 7pm in Holy Cross Church in Lisnaskea. It is also live streamed at Churchservices.tv/lisnaskea.

GALWAY

Emmanuel House Clonfert: An afternoon of reflection with guest speaker Fr Chris Alar MIC, author of 'Understanding Divine Mercy' and 'After Suicide: There's Hope for Them and You' on Thursday, October 5 at 2pm.

Monthly first Saturday Fatima devotions led by Eddie Stones and team in Emmanuel House Clonfert, October 7 at 11am with talks, adoration, Confession, music, Mass and healing service. Please bring a packed lunch.

KILDARE

A Medjugorje Prayer Group meets every Monday at 7pm for 40 minutes in the Dominican Oratory, Newbridge.

KILKENNY

St John's Parish Scripture group meets in the presbytery at 7.30pm each Thursday to reflect on Scripture texts for the following Sunday's Mass.

LEITRIM

Daily rosary at 6pm in St Joseph's Church, Leitrim Village.

LIMERICK

Young adult study group takes place every second Sunday 6.30-8.30 in St Saviours Dominicans parish hall. Meetings will focus on the human person and our call to love, according to the teachings of St Thomas Aquinas and St John Paul II.

Blessing of pets for the feast of St Francis of Assisi takes place in the garden by St Lelia's Church on Wednesday, October 4, at 11am.

LOUTH

'Does God exist? Are you

happy?' Talks on faith for young and adults by the Neocatechumenal Way take place in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Drogheda; Mondays and Thursdays at 7.30pm, come and listen!

MAYO

The next Latin Mass will take place on Sunday October 8, in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. Knock Shrine at 6pm.

MEATH

Navan parish novena in honour of the Sacred Heart takes place Fridays in St Oliver's Church with 7.30pm Mass and devotions.

ROSCOMMON

Eucharistic adoration takes place the first Friday of each month in Drumboylan Church (Ardcarne Parish) from 9am-10pm.

SLIGO

There will be Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction after the 7pm Mass every Tuesday in Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Church, Dromore West and after the 10am Mass every Wednesday in Our Lady Star of the Sea Church, Rathlee. Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction also takes place after the 10am Mass every Thursday in St James's Church, Easkey.

TIPPERARY

A Medjugorje prayer night takes place the second Thursday of every month in Glencomeragh house, beginning with the rosary at 8pm during which Confession will be available, followed by Mass, adoration and prayers for healing.

WATERFORD

A 'Theology of the Body' study group, subtitled 'Discovering God's master plan for your life' to take place in the Foyer of Charity, Dunmore East, on Mondays at 7.30-9pm, beginning October 2. Registration essential, contact hellywilliams@gmail.com.

WEXFORD

Religious Family of the Incarnate Word to host a family day on October 1 from 3-7.30pm in Most Holy Trinity Church, Bunclody, Y21DX60.

World Report

IN BRIEF

Priest and seminarian abducted in Nigeria recall ordeal

● Fr Paul Sanogo and seminarian Melchior Maharini, who were kidnapped from their Missionaries of Africa community in Nigeria's Catholic Diocese of Minna, came back to the community on August 23 weary, traumatised, and sick.

The two had spent three weeks in captivity, where they were flogged almost daily, made to sleep on rocks out in the open, and forced to walk for miles barefoot as their kidnappers moved from spot to spot in the forest they were taken to following their August 3 abduction.

When they spoke to *ACI Africa* on September 1, about a week after their release, the two said the trauma they experienced during their captivity was a blessing, as it had strengthened their faith.

Mexican diocese denounces hacking of its social media accounts

● Different social media accounts related to the Diocese of Irapuato in the Mexican state of Guanajuato were hacked and inappropriate content was posted on the accounts.

"We want to inform you that in recent days, six Facebook accounts related

to the Diocese of Irapuato and Our Lady of Solitude Parish have been hacked. We condemn this attack on our social media," wrote Fr Efrén Silva Plasencia, spokesman for the diocese, in a statement posted on Facebook September 16.

Catholic org condemns sexual enslavement of Mozambican Christians

● Reports have emerged of Islamist jihadists operating in Mozambique forcefully converting abducted Christian women into Islam and sexually enslaving some of them.

In an interview with *ACI Africa*, the director of the Denis Hurley Peace Institute confirmed reports of a leaked internal circular, purportedly from the leadership of the Islamic State, allegedly advising the group's fighters in the Southern African country to also kill those who refuse to convert to Islam.

"We have confirmed from the people in Cabo Delgado that indeed, it is true; the fighters are turning Christian women into sex objects and forcing them to convert to Islam," Johan Viljoen said in the September 20 interview.

"We condemn any attempt to force people to change their religion," Mr Viljoen added. "We condemn the Islamists for forcing women into sex slavery. It is a reprehensible violation of human rights."

Spanish priests criticise radio personalities who attack Mother Teresa

● Several priests with a presence on social media and the civil association Enraizados have protested derogatory comments made against St Teresa of Calcutta on a radio program in Spain.

A contributor to the Spanish radio station Cadena SER's main news program, Roberto Enriquez Higuera, known as Bob Pop, claimed that St Teresa of Calcutta was part of a list of "bad people who did things well" along with personalities such as Shakira, Diana Spencer (Lady Di), the writer Truman Capote, the politician Margaret Thatcher, and the Nobel laureate in literature Mario Vargas Llosa.

In response, Fr Jaime Melchior pointed out on X that the attack on St Teresa of Calcutta "hides something more important: Smearing people, and their heroic actions, worthy of imitation, so that we believe it's impossible to attain holiness".

Woman arrested for silent prayer at UK abortion clinics gets police apology

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, the woman twice arrested for silent prayer outside UK abortion clinics, has received a police apology and confirmation that she will not face charges for violating a local 'buffer zone' protection order.

Though Ms Vaughan-Spruce said she would return to the clinic to pray, she warned that her treatment has implications for the future of basic freedoms in the UK.

"This isn't 1984, but 2023 – I should never have been arrested or investigated simply for the thoughts I held in my own mind," Ms Vaughan-Spruce said, alluding to George Orwell's dystopian novel. "Silent prayer is never criminal," she said in a September 22 statement.

On March 6, Ms Vaughan-Spruce was arrested for praying in a 'buffer zone' outside an abortion clinic on Station Road, Birmingham. Local authorities had declared a Public Space Protection Order near the clinic, using a legal mechanism intended to prevent antisocial behaviour.

Prohibited activities in this zone include approval or disapproval of abortion through protest, which "includes but is not limited to graphic, verbal, or written means, prayer, or counselling". The order also bars interference, intimidation, or harassment, recording or photographic clinic staff or clients, and the display of any text or imagery related to abortion.

Ms Vaughan-Spruce was



Isabel Vaughan-Spruce. Photo: ADF UK

previously arrested December 6, 2022, for silent prayer outside the same abortion facility, which was closed at the time. In February, the Birmingham Magistrates' Court acquitted her of all charges related to the first case.

West Midlands police apologised to Ms Vaughan-Spruce for taking so long to close her second case. They said there would be no further investigation and no further action taken.

Ms Vaughan-Spruce welcomed the end of the investigation and the police apology but said her case highlights "the extremely harmful

implications" of what happened to her.

"What happened to me signals to others that they too could face arrest, interrogation, investigation, and potential prosecution if caught exercising their basic freedom of thought," she said.

Police initially told Ms Vaughan-Spruce the delay was due to her case being referred to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for charges, though CPS has denied this claim, according to ADF UK. CPS had no information about her second case and said police should not refer such cases to the CPS

when they have the power to decide on charges themselves.

Ms Vaughan-Spruce is the director of March for Life UK and helps support women in crisis pregnancies. She has regularly prayed near abortion clinics for 20 years.

"Now that authorities have twice settled on the conclusion that silent prayer is not a crime – a conclusion also reached by the Home Secretary last week – I am thankful to resume my practice of praying silently for women in crisis pregnancies," she said.

Catholic priests bless same-sex couples in Germany

Several hundred people gathered September 20 near the cathedral in Cologne, Germany, to hold a blessing service that catered especially to LGBTQ+ people and people who remarried after a divorce, while those protesting the service prayed the rosary next to it.

Some participants waved rainbow flags and held up placards with statements such as "Love wins" or "Blessings for all" on the square in front of Cologne Central Station in the shadow of the world-famous twin-towered cathedral.

A carpet of flowers in the shape of a heart laid in front of an altar.

According to the police, about 600 people attended the service, held under the motto "All you need is love". It was conducted by 19 Catholic priests and pastoral ministers, 16 of whom were from the Archdiocese of Cologne.

The event was held in reaction to the reprimand of a priest from the archdiocese who celebrated the first such service in the town of Mettmann in March. That month a majority of participants in

the 'Synodal Path' – the Catholic Church in Germany's reform consultations – had voted in favour of allowing blessing ceremonies for such couples.

Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki of Cologne recently expressed understanding for same-sex couples who felt a deep desire for a Church blessing. However, he added that it was a question that first had to be clarified at the level of the universal Church.

UN vows to protect 'reproductive rights' during next pandemic

Global leaders adopted a United Nations resolution this week that urged member states to take certain actions when preparing for and responding to a pandemic – one of those actions appears to ask governments to secure access to abortion.

The resolution's language

states that the focus is "pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response" and asks states to commit to actions that are "driven by equity and the respect for human rights". The section focused on equality includes a commitment by states to protecting "reproductive rights".

"[We] call upon member states to take all measures necessary to ensure the right of women and girls to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive rights," operative paragraph 10 of the global

"call to action" reads in part.

United Nations General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding and member states have wide discretion in how they interpret the text. However, some pro-life lawmakers are concerned about the language.



Edited by Jason Osborne
jason@irishcatholic.ie

Germany marches for life



Some of the more than 6,000 people participating in the March for Life in Germany are seen September 16. For the first time, the annual event was held simultaneously two cities, Berlin and Cologne. Photo: OSV News/courtesy Bundesverband Lebensrecht Germany

Experts warn of 'destruction' of ethnic Armenians

The "destruction" of an enclave of 120,000 Armenian Christians in the Nagorno-Karabakh region is imminent, warns Siobhan Nash-Marshall, a US-based human rights advocate.

"The impact of the recent attacks and subsequent disarmament will almost certainly result in the destruction of the people of Artsakh," Ms Nash-Marshall told CNA.

In 2011, Ms Nash-Marshall founded the Christians in Need Foundation (CINF) to help Armenian Christians in the region and in 2020 she started a school for children and adults in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Ms Nash-Marshall said that as the Azeri government seeks to further assert its control over Nagorno-Karabakh, also known as Artsakh, the ethnic Armenians will be forcibly removed.

"There are those Artsakhians who will not leave their homeland — those lands that their people have inhabited for millennia. They will be forcibly removed or worse," Ms Nash-Marshall said.

For those Armenians who choose to leave, Ms Nash-Marshall said they "will bear permanent scars akin to those of the descendants of genocide survivors".

Though internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh is made up almost entirely of Christian ethnic Armenians who claim self-sovereignty under the auspices of the Republic of Artsakh.

On September 20, ethnic

Armenians in the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh agreed to lay down their arms and dissolve their military forces following a short but intense Azerbaijan offensive on September 19.

The attacks, which included rocket and mortar fire, were perpetrated by Azerbaijan under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev.

In just over one day, over 200 Armenian Christians were killed, including 10 civilians, and many more were injured, *The New York Times* reported.

According to the Artsakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the attacks also forced over 10,000 people, including women, children, and elderly, to evacuate their homes.

Ruben Vardenyan, former Artsakh state minister, called on the United Nations Security Council to take "concrete steps" to protect the Armenian Christians in Nagorno-Karabakh.

"The UN Security Council must go beyond mere calls for action. No more empty rhetoric; we need concrete steps," Mr Vardenyan said in a September 21 X statement.

"Currently, 120,000 Armenians are facing a dire situation, with hundreds killed, wounded, and missing. We urgently require a UN mission to be dispatched to Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh."

Mr Vardenyan said that without aid from the international community, "the risk of massive ethnic cleansing will inevitably increase".

11 killed as jihadists reportedly target Christians in Mozambican village

At least 11 people were killed September 15 after members of the Islamic State attacked a village in Mozambique and opened fire on Christians after hand-picking them from Muslims, the Catholic pontifical and charity foundation Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) International reported.

In a September 18 report, ACN indicated that the terrorists arrived in the village of Naquitengue, located in Mocímboa da Praia district of the embattled Cabo Delgado province, in

the early afternoon and summoned the villagers.

After separating the Christians from the Muslims, "based on names" to identify them, "they opened fire on the Christians," the report stated.

The charity foundation has gathered accounts of those affected by the violence in the Mozambican district and said: "The reports are disturbing."

Those who spoke to ACN recounted that Christians were "showered with bullets" in the incident.

"There are also records of burned houses and destroyed property," ACN reported. "Hours later, on Sunday, the terrorist organisation Islamic State claimed this attack, reporting 11 deaths, although the number of victims is expected to be higher, at least 12, with several injured."

The Catholic entity further reported that the attack, which it described as "of enormous cruelty," caused panic among the populations, who fled to the forests.

Vatican roundup

Pope names two Chinese bishops to synod

● On the recommendation of the Catholic bishops of mainland China in consultation with the Chinese government, Pope Francis has named two bishops from the country's mainland as members of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

Bishop Joseph Yang Yongqiang of Zhoucun, who has served as vice president of the government-related Council of Chinese Bishops, and Bishop Anthony Yao Shun of Jining, the first bishop ordained after the Vatican and China signed a provisional agreement on the nomination of bishops in 2018, will be among the 365 synod members, a number which includes the Pope, the Vatican said.

The Vatican released an updated list September 21 of people expected to participate in the assembly of the Synod of Bishops October 4-19.

A list released in July included Cardinal-designate Stephen Chow Sau-Yan of Hong Kong, but no bishop from the Chinese mainland.

Bishop Luis Marín de San Martín, undersecretary of the synod, told reporters that 464 people are expected to be involved in the synod, including 54 women participating as full members and 27 women joining as experts, facilitators or special guests.

Vatican asks UN Security Council to join efforts for peace in Ukraine

● The Vatican urged members of the UN Security Council to be "creative and courageous artisans of peace and weavers of constructive dialogue" to find a peaceful solution to the war in Ukraine.

Security Council, are called upon to join efforts in the search for a just and lasting peace for Ukraine as an important element of the global peace of which the world thirsts.

Addressing a meeting of the UN Security Council in New York September 20, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican's foreign minister, said the "entire international community, more than ever, cannot surrender itself and let this issue pass in silence".

He said "all member states of the United Nations, and especially those of the

The Security Council meeting included a speech from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy who criticised the council's structure which gives five countries the power to veto any council resolution or decision, saying that Russia's misuse of the veto power is "to the detriment of all other UN members".

Vatican and Lutheran officials call for joint study of Augsburg Confession

● During an ecumenical prayer service at the assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, the Vatican's chief ecumenist and the federation's general secretary formally called for a joint reflection on the Augsburg Confession, a fundamental statement of Lutheran faith.

"A common reflection could lead to another 'milestone' on the way from conflict to communion," said Cardinal Kurt Koch, prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, and the Rev. Anne Burghardt, the federation's general secretary, as they read a "Common Word" declaration to the assembly September 19.

The assembly, held September 13-19 in Krakow, Poland, is the main governing body of the Lutheran World Federation, which represents 150 Lutheran churches in 99 countries.

The Augsburg Confession was drafted in 1530 in an attempt "to bear witness to the faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church," the declaration said.

"At the time of its writing, ecclesial unity was probably endangered, but ecclesial separation was not yet finally accomplished."

Because the statement of faith was meant to witness to the unity of the Church before the final ruptures of the Protestant Reformation, the declaration said, it is "not only of historical interest; rather, it holds an ecumenical potential of lasting relevance".



Letter from Rome



Chris Altieri

“This business will get out of control,” intoned the inimitable Fred Thompson as Rear Admiral Joshua Painter in the film adaptation of Tom Clancy’s *The Hunt for Red October*, after an F-14 had crashed on the deck of his aircraft carrier that was also carrying CIA analyst Jack Ryan, hero of that story and several others.

“This business will get out of control,” Thompson’s Painter repeats, “and we’ll be lucky to live through it.”

I thought of that scene this week, after the largely self-inflicted double whammy that hit Pope Francis and the Vatican in the form of developments in two gruesome abuse and cover-up stories. Both set in relief the ironic reality of the Vatican’s addiction to talk, which is at once too much and too little to control the spiralling narrative of disastrous failure to deal effectively with entrenched problems.

Rupnik

The first was the frankly bizarre statement that came from the Diocese of Rome regarding its “investigation” into Rome’s *Centro Aletti* – better known as the base of operations for the disgraced former celebrity Jesuit, Marko Rupnik, credibly accused of serial sexual, psychological, and spiritual abuse perpetrated against nearly 20 women over three decades – which drew a clean bill of health from the probe.

The *Centro Aletti* has been a “public association of the Faithful” under the aegis of the Rome vicariate since 2019. Cardinal Angelo De Donatis – the Cardinal Vicar of Rome – has gone out of his way to make it clear that neither he nor the Pope’s diocesan governing apparatus had knowledge until “very recent times” of the allegations against Rupnik, and never had any authority to do anything about Rupnik or the allegations against him.

That’s tough to credit, quite frankly, not least since the churchman who first brought victims’ testimony to Rome was none other than Bishop Daniele Libanori, an auxiliary of the Rome diocese under Cardinal De Donatis and a Jesuit, who conducted a fact-finding mission to the Loyola Community of women religious that Rupnik had helped to start in his native Slovenia several decades ago.

Cardinal De Donatis’s own investigator, Msgr Giacomo Incitti of the Pontifical Urban University, found that “within the Centro Aletti, a healthy community life free of any particular critical issues is present”. He also found that Rupnik – who has never faced trial for his alleged abuse – was nevertheless subjected to “gravely anomalous procedures”

On recent abuse scandals, Vatican talk is both too much and too little



Pope Francis meets with Maria Campatelli, director of the *Centro Aletti*, a centre dedicated to research and art that promotes a dialogue between Eastern and Western Christianity, at the Vatican September 15. The centre was founded by former Jesuit Fr Marko Rupnik, who was expelled from the order in July after being accused of sexual abuse. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

in connection with an excommunication he incurred for giving sacramental absolution to an illicit sex partner, a serious crime in Church law.

Msgr Incitti apparently had some sort of access to secret documents no one at the Rome diocese was supposed to be able to see, which allowed him to reach his conclusion and also raise “well-founded doubts about the request for excommunication itself”.

Predictably, alleged victims were incensed.

No fewer than five of Rupnik’s accusers published an open letter saying the vicariate’s statement “ridicules not only the pain of the victims, but also that of the entire Church, which is mortally wounded by such obstinate arrogance”.

Saunders

The second story involves an Australian prelate, Christopher Saunders, the former bishop of Broome – a sprawling diocese in the Australian outback that covers an area roughly the size of France and is home to

only 50,000 people – who led the diocese from 1996 until 2020, and who resigned in 2021 after police investigations into alleged sex crimes and intense media scrutiny.

Prosecutors declined to bring charges against Bishop Saunders then, but police in Western Australia have reportedly asked to see a new dossier detailing the findings of an independent probe conducted at the behest of the Church in Australia after Pope Francis ordered an investigation under *Vos estis lux mundi*, his 2019 apostolic letter outlining an accountability mechanism for prelates accused of abuse or cover-up.

Mandated by Pope Francis a year ago this month, and directed by Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane, the Church-ordered probe reportedly found that Bishop Saunders likely abused at least four boys from Aboriginal communities. The investigation concluded that Bishop Saunders likely groomed nearly 70 other Aboriginal boys and men, and may have abused at least some of them.

News reports quote from a 200-page dossier that has apparently been with Pope Francis and the Vatican for some six months, which describes Bishop Saunders as “a sexual predator that seeks to prey upon vulnerable Aboriginal men and boys,” plying them with alcohol he sometimes allegedly smuggled into dry Aboriginal districts.

Bishop Saunders is alleged to have used Church funds to support his activities.

In a statement issued after Australia’s 7News broadcast a report of the story, the president of the Australian bishops’ conference, Timothy Costelloe, said that a Church process against Bishop Saunders had to wait until the police investigation was concluded, but expressed hope something will happen soon.

“In due time, the Holy See will make its determinations,” Archbishop Costelloe said. “It is hoped,” he added, “that this will not be unduly delayed”.

“It is important that a just and authoritative finding be made,” Archbishop Costelloe also said. “Only then,” he said, “can the process of rebuilding the Church community in Broome ... continue to make progress and bring healing.”

Archbishop Costelloe isn’t wrong, but there’s a strong case for the

idea that “due time” has long since passed. Also, it appears that Australian Church leaders were not going to say anything until the story broke in the press. *Vatican News* had a small item two days after the story broke, but it was buried on the English-language page, contained scant detail, and quoted very sparingly from Archbishop Costelloe’s statement.

In the Rupnik case, the vicar protests too much. In the Saunders case, Church leaders are saying far too little. In both cases, observers may be readily forgiven the impression that interests other than justice are being served.

“Justice,” the saying goes, “must not only be done, but must be seen to be done.”

The bitter irony is that the complete transparency for which Pope Francis has repeatedly called, if not always practiced, would be the best way – indeed, the only way – to regain control of the narrative.

Come clean about the Rupnik business. Give Bishop Saunders a meaningful public trial. Let people see justice being done. Let them – let us – at least see you trying.

Stop talking about it, and just do it.

i Christopher R. Altieri is a journalist, author, and editor.

“Bishop Saunders is alleged to have used Church funds to support his activities”

Presidential candidate makes Pope Francis a campaign issue in Argentina



Lucien Chauvin

BUENOS AIRES – Pope Francis may be nearly 7,000 miles from Argentina, his native land, but it certainly does not feel that way as the country gears up for a presidential election on October 22.

While the Pope has strived to stay on the sidelines of political debates in Argentina, deciding against visiting home during the first 10 years of his papacy, he has been dragged into the race by the current frontrunner in the race, far-right congressman Javier Milei, who has made a name for himself by loudly proclaiming controversial ideas, from replacing Argentina's peso with the US dollar to allowing people to sell their organs if they are in need of cash.

One of his favourite targets however has been Pope Francis. Mr Milei has been increasing the volume as the race has intensified, turning the Pope and the Church's social teaching into electoral fodder.

Criticism

The Pope has received criticism at home in the past, including a whisper campaign prior to his election in 2013 about unfounded complicity with the country's military regime in the 1970s and early 1980s, but that pales in comparison to what has been said in this presidential campaign.

The Argentine Catholic Church has responded with Masses and public statements supporting the Pope, but the attacks have not stopped, and there is increasing concern that the vitriolic rhetoric will deepen divisions as the country struggles through a deep economic crisis.

Bishop Oscar Ojea of San Isidro, who is president of the Argentine bishops' conference, published a reflection September 10 on the presidential campaign. He did not mention Mr Milei by name, but called out "one of the candidates who has used irrepro-



Argentine presidential candidate Javier Milei of La Libertad Avanza coalition greets supporters during a campaign rally in Buenos Aires September 12. Photo: OSV News/Agustin Marcarian, Reuters

ducible insults and lies" against the Pope.

He said it was impossible "to build a country without dialogue and with insults and shouts".

“This is more than an attack on Francis, it is an attack on the Church. Social justice is at the heart of Catholic teaching, so we cannot sit back in silence”

Fr Jose María Di Paola, known as Padre Pepe, said statements from Bishop Ojea and other clergy were among the strongest by Church leaders in the 40 years since Argentina returned to democracy with elections in October 1983.

Fr Di Paola is the spokesman for the *curas villeros*, priests who live and work in shantytowns in Buenos Aires and other cities around the country. The group's latest

statement, which coincided with Bishop Ojea's reflection, did not shy away from naming Mr Milei, rejecting his "vulgar aggressions that are not worthy of someone wanting to represent our country". Fr Di Paola celebrated the reparation Mass with other slum priests, and with thousands of Faithful present September 5 in the villa 21-24 neighbourhood in Buenos Aires.

Fr Di Paola told OSV News that the insults go beyond the Pope and are a direct attack on the Church.

He said the Church had to continue responding to Mr Milei after the most recent comments on the Pope, which were made during an interview with US media personality Tucker Carlson, who posted it on X, the social media platform previously known as Twitter. The interview reportedly has been viewed more than 400 million times.

Social Justice

Mr Milei repeated his previous line that the Pope is a "communist" and "on the side of bloody dictatorships," but also launched criticism of social

justice.

"Social justice is stealing the fruit of someone's labour and giving it to another ... support for social justice is support for theft, which is against the Ten Commandments," he said during the interview with Carlson.

Fr Di Paola said that "this is more than an attack on Francis, it is an attack on the Church. Social justice is at the heart of Catholic teaching, so we cannot sit back in silence. We must speak out".

“The people who come in here do not agree with what he says about Francis, but they are tired of politics as usual”

He said the *curas villeros*, Spanish for "slum priests," had met with other candidates, but flatly ruled out a sit down with Mr Milei.

Mr Milei stunned

Argentina's political class by placing first in the open, simultaneous primary in August when all candidates ran. He received around 30%, compared to 28.3% for the traditional conservative Together for Change coalition and 27.3% for centre-left governing coalition Unity for the Homeland.

The poll numbers have not changed much since August, with Mr Milei still in the lead but far from the total needed to win and avoid a runoff vote November 19. Under Argentina's electoral law, a candidate wins with a majority of votes or with 40%, but with a spread of more than 10 points from the nearest opponent.

Economic

What has changed since August are Argentina's economic numbers, which have gotten worse. Inflation in August hit 12.4%, the highest in three decades, and is moving toward 130% for the year. The economy shrank 4.9% in the second quarter of this year, the first time since the pandemic that it has

contracted.

Mariano Viale, a shopkeeper in Buenos Aires, said he did not think Argentines voting for Mr Milei shared his views on Pope Francis.

"For many, what Milei says is about shock value," he said. "The people who come in here do not agree with what he says about Francis, but they are tired of politics as usual."

If Mr Milei were to win, it is unlikely that Pope Francis would travel to Argentina, as well as neighbouring Uruguay, in 2024 as many, including the Pontiff himself, have speculated.

Fr Carlos Galli, a theologian at Argentina's Catholic University, said the Pope has stayed out of Argentine politics and that would not change.

He said the Pope had a strained relationship with former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2015). "It would certainly be worse under Milei," he said.

i Lucien Chauvin writes for OSV News from Montevideo, Uruguay.

Letters

Letter of the week

Pope's call for harmony in Mongolia resounds deeply

Dear Editor, The recent visit of Pope Francis to Mongolia is a momentous occasion that holds profound significance for Catholics and the world at large. In a time when the global community faces various challenges and divisions, the Pope's visit to Mongolia sends a powerful message of unity, peace, and dialogue.

Mongolia, a predomi-

nantly Buddhist nation, may not have a large Catholic population, but Pope Francis's journey to this land expresses his commitment to fostering interfaith understanding and cooperation. His visit serves as a symbol of bridge-building, emphasising the importance of dialogue among different cultures and religions.

In a world marked by

conflicts and misunderstandings, the Pope's call for peace and harmony resonates deeply. His words and actions during this visit remind us all of the universal values of compassion, tolerance, and respect that are at the heart of our Catholic Faith.

Pope Francis's outreach to the people of Mongolia exemplifies his dedication

to reaching out to all corners of the world, spreading the message of love and solidarity. It is an inspiration for Catholics everywhere to continue working towards a more peaceful and inclusive world, where differences are celebrated, and the common good is upheld.

*Yours etc.,
Michael O'Dowd
Belfast, Co. Antrim*

Safeguarding Christians in the Holy Land

Dear Editor, Numerous reports and testimonies indicate a distressing deterioration in the treatment of the Christian minority in the Holy Land [*The Irish Catholic* – September 7, 2023].

Instances of anti-Christian harassment, including verbal abuse and aggression against residents and pilgrims, have surged, particularly in Jerusalem, a city of profound religious significance for Christians worldwide.

In response to these developments, it is imperative that all stakeholders, including the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority, take immediate action to safeguard the rights and safety of Christians living in the region.

*Yours etc.,
Diana Cartwright
Ringsend, Dublin 4*



The power of a pilgrimage to Lourdes

Dear Editor, My journey to Lourdes was not just a physical one; it was a journey of the heart and soul. As I approached the sacred grotto where the Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous in 1858, I was overwhelmed by a profound sense of peace and serenity. It was as if the burdens of everyday life had been momentarily lifted, and I was enveloped in a loving embrace that transcended

the confines of time and space.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Lourdes is its inclusivity. People from all walks of life, regardless of their religious beliefs, gather here in search of solace, healing, and a deeper connection with the divine. The healing waters of the spring at Lourdes are renowned for their miraculous properties, and countless individuals have reported experiencing

physical and emotional healing during their pilgrimage.

But Lourdes is not just about miraculous cures; it is also a place of profound spiritual growth and renewal. The daily processions, the recitation of the rosary, and the opportunity for quiet reflection in the grotto all contribute to a sense of inner peace and spiritual rejuvenation. I witnessed people from various faiths and backgrounds coming together in prayer

and solidarity, united by a common quest for spiritual fulfilment.

Lourdes should be advertised not just as a Catholic pilgrimage but as a destination that can profoundly assist anyone on their spiritual journey (hopefully back to the Church!)

*Yours etc.,
Erica Perez
Cork City, Cork*

Improving supports and promoting a culture of life

Dear Editor, With the explosive increase in abortion in Ireland, there is cause for a moment of reflection on the sanctity of life and the urgency of finding alternatives to abortion and tackling the dismantling of the current safeguards in place.

The proposal gaining traction to eliminate the three-day wait period before a woman can have an abortion must be opposed tooth and nail. This waiting period was instituted to ensure that women have adequate time to consider the gravity of their decision,

to explore alternatives, and to receive the support they may need. Removing this safeguard would risk hastening decisions made in distress or haste, potentially regretted later. Thousands of unborn babies' lives have been saved because of this. Instead of advocating for the removal of this waiting period, we should be focusing on improving the support systems available to women facing unplanned pregnancies. We should invest in comprehensive, accessible, and unbiased counselling services that provide women with

accurate information about their options, including adoption and parenting. Strengthening these support structures can empower women to make informed choices that align with their values and life circumstances.

Furthermore, we must promote a culture of life by addressing the root causes that lead women to consider abortion.

*Yours etc.,
Veronica Crean
Newbridge, Co. Kildare*

Oversimplifying challenges regarding sex education

Dear Editor, As a parent I agree wholeheartedly with David Quinn's article 'A Simplistic Take on the Church and Sex Ed' [*The Irish Catholic* – September 14, 2023].

It is undeniable that the issue of sex education is complex and multifaceted. Richie Sadlier's programme on RTÉ, 'Let's Talk About Sex' oversimplifies the challenges we face in providing comprehensive and balanced sex education. While it is essential to promote open conversations about sex, it is equally important to acknowledge the diversity of beliefs and values in our society.

Many Catholic schools strive to provide a well-rounded education that includes teaching about contraception in a neutral and descriptive manner, alongside the Church's perspective. It is a disservice to imply that these schools promote shame or withhold essential information from students.

Furthermore, the idea of a one-size-fits-all approach to sex education is unrealistic and ignores the individuality of students and families. The programme's emphasis on encouraging masturbation and discussing pornography in a value-neutral way raises valid concerns about the potential consequences of such an approach – the main being that it is impossible to do so. It is essential to consider the emotional and psychological aspects of sexual education, not just the physical.

Parents play a crucial role in their children's upbringing, and their views should not be marginalised in the debate over sex education. While educators have an important role to play, the ultimate responsibility lies with parents to instil their values and beliefs in their children.

We must remember that teaching about sex and relationships requires a thoughtful and nuanced approach that respects the diversity of perspectives in our society.

It is my hope that educators and parents can come together to find a balanced and comprehensive approach to sex education that respects the values and beliefs of all involved.

*Yours etc.,
Brenda O'Hara
Balgriffin, Dublin 17*

Testament to the enduring mission of the Church

Dear Editor, I write to express my admiration for Sr Medhin Tesfay who was recognised by Trócaire for her extraordinary dedication to the people of Tigray [*The Irish Catholic* – September 14, 2023].

The Daughters of Charity in the region have exemplified the spirit of selflessness and solidarity with the poor.

Irish missionaries should be a great source of pride and inspiration at home, but unfortunately this history of selflessness and bravery has been mostly forgot.

In a world marred by conflict and suffering, Sr Medhin and her fellow sisters stand as shining examples of faith in action, and their work is a testament to the enduring mission of the Church to serve and uplift those in need.

*Yours etc.,
Cait Delaney
Dublin 6, Dublin*

Letters to the Editor

All letters should include the writer's full name, postal address and telephone numbers (day and evening). Letter writers may receive a subsequent telephone call from *The Irish Catholic* as part of our authentication process which does not amount to a commitment to publish.

We regret that we cannot give prior notice of a letter's publication date, acknowledge unpublished letters or discuss the merits of letters. We do not

publish pseudonyms or other formulae to conceal the writer's identity, such as "name and address with editor". We do not print letters addressed to someone else, open letters, or verse. Letters to the Editor should only be sent to *The Irish Catholic*, and not other publications. Letters should not exceed 300 words and may be shortened for space requirements.

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, September 28, 2023

The Sunday Gospel

It isn't too late to change for the better

Page 34



CS. Lewis' growing popularity 60 years after his death

A desk overlooks the garden in The Kilns in Oxford, England, where CS. Lewis penned his Christian stories, including "The Chronicles of Narnia." Experts agree that Lewis succeeded in capturing the Christian imagination where the theological abstractions of churches often seemed too high brow. Photos: OSV News

In a rambling red-brick house on the western edge of Oxford, England, a melancholy desk sits at a bay window looking out over tangled woodland.

In the foreground, an ancient ashtray stands broodingly against a worn leather armchair, surrounded by wall maps and pictures depicting a fantasy landscape.

When Clive Staples Lewis bought The Kilns, a former brick factory, in 1930, he used its quiet remoteness to produce a stream of literary and spiritual masterpieces that are still quoted with reverence today.

But he achieved most fame with stories for children that contained deep Christian echoes, the best known of



CS Lewis's thought continues to influence believers and non-believers alike, writes Jonathan Luxmoore

which, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, has sold 100 million copies in more than 40 languages.

Until recently, paradoxically, CS. Lewis had been largely ignored at Oxford University, where he taught for three decades until his early death from bone cancer November 22, 1963. He gained greater recognition in the United States, which he never visited.

With popular interest

continuing to grow, however, and three Narnia books – *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Prince Caspian* and *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* – now blockbuster films, things could be changing.

"Like his close friend, JRR. Tolkien, Lewis expressed his Christian faith through narrative and imagination which chimes in well with the needs of our contemporary

culture," said Fr Michael Ward, a Lewis expert at Oxford.

"People pick up intuitively on the timeless religious element in his books, even if they're not directly aware of their fundamentally Christian message," he said.

Lewis won an Oxford scholarship from his native Northern Ireland in 1916, graduating in classics and English after fighting in World War I, and becoming a fellow of Magdalen College in 1925.

Oxford city landmarks include the Eagle and Child pub, where his informal literary group, The Inklings, met to discuss ideas; the walkways where he nurtured his fascination for Nordic, Celtic and Greek legends; and the Anglican

Holy Trinity Church where he lies buried with his brother, Warren Lewis.

Despite his prodigious output, however, Oxford's academic establishment had traditionally been dismissive of Lewis.

The English faculty, which he did much to develop, considered him too preoccupied with Christianity, while the university's theology faculty viewed him as a literary intruder.

As a new generation is introduced to the world of Narnia, Judith Wolfe, editor of Oxford's *Journal of Inklings Studies*, said a decade ago that Lewis' Christian vision was then gaining a new relevance.

Lewis was writing at a time



Georgie Henley is pictured with a lion named Aslan, voiced by actor Liam Neeson, in the movie *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.

of profound change, she said, when the universal acceptance of humanity's sinfulness was breaking down under the impact of modern Freudian analysis, and the traditional answers offered by Christian apologists no longer carried conviction.

Witness

He saw how Christianity's witness to the world was diminished by denominational rivalries, and believed his role was to show what united Christians rather than divided them.

"Although Lewis wasn't a professional theologian, his acute sense of the world Christianity portrays was just as profound as the best modern theologians," Prof. Wolfe said. "He also realised Christian literature was failing to present good and holy characters who were also interesting – the evil ones were always more compelling. By portraying Christ as the lion Aslan in the 'Narnia' stories, he hoped to reveal the attractiveness of the good in real life."

Born at Belfast in November 1898 into the Anglican Church of Ireland, Lewis abandoned his faith at school, but was reconverted to Christianity at Oxford by the devoutly Catholic JRR. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*.

In *Surprised by Joy*, he

recalled being brought back to Christianity "kicking, struggling, resentful, darting my eyes in every direction for a chance to escape".

"That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me," he wrote. "I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England."

Lewis disappointed Tolkien by declining to become a Catholic, and instead remained a "high church" Anglican. But he was sympathetic to the Catholic doctrines of purgatory, mortal sin and prayers to the saints, and retained an ecumenical focus – perhaps in reaction to the bitter religious divisions of Northern Ireland.

His book *Mere Christianity*, based on acclaimed wartime broadcasts for the BBC, tackled popular objections to Christianity from a sceptical viewpoint.

Diarmaid MacCulloch, Oxford professor of Church history, said Lewis' nondenominational approach to Christianity, which predated ecumenical attitudes at the 1962-1965 Second Vatican Council, explained his popularity in the United States.

"Lewis tends to attract more conservative

Christians, both Protestants and Catholics, at a time when religion is undergoing a realignment between the forces of tradition and change," said Prof. MacCulloch, a fellow of the British Academy, whose monumental 2009 *History of Christianity* was accompanied by a BBC series.

Walter Hooper, a Catholic American who lived with Lewis at the time of his death, told *Our Sunday Visitor* in 2013 that he saw other reasons why interest in Lewis looks set to grow, particularly among Catholics.

Hooper, who died in 2020 at age 89, recalled then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger citing Lewis' 1943 book, *The Abolition of Man*, during a 1988 lecture at Britain's Cambridge University, and praising its defence of natural law and rejection of "destructive relativism".

Revealing

Hooper also remembered St John Paul II revealing a deep knowledge of Lewis' works when he met Hooper at the pontiff's request after a Rome general audience, particularly lauding his 1960 work, *The Four Loves*, and his devotion to a practical apostolate.

"Lewis owed it to his fans to avoid complexities and set Christianity's core beliefs in place," Hooper said around the 50th

anniversary of Lewis' death. "I think he's being taken much more seriously in the Catholic Church now, at a time when the way these core beliefs are presented is all-important but the sense of meaning must always stay the same."

All of this will add pressure for fuller academic recognition of Lewis, whom many now see as one of the 20th Century's most important Christian writers.

Back at The Kilns, the rooms still exist where Lewis received Tolkien and other associates, where he played scrabble with his American wife Joy Davidman, a former communist and fellow convert before she succumbed to cancer at age 45, and where he died the same day as President John F. Kennedy.

The once-derelict house, restored as a study centre by US volunteers in 1993-2002, is now owned by the California-based CS. Lewis Foundation, and stands in a suburban landscape much changed from Lewis' own days.

But visits are increasing as interest grows worldwide in this original and insightful Christian writer.

i Jonathan Luxmoore covers Church affairs in Europe from Oxford and Warsaw.

Author CS. Lewis is pictured in a 1955 portrait by Walter Stoneman.



‘Behold your mother’: Jesus’ most human action shows us who God is



Fr Eric Banecker

When we speak about the Incarnation, the reality of the second person of the Trinity taking on human nature, we can fall into two bad habits.

One is to resort to technical language, which, though necessary at times, can serve to obscure the sublime truth of this dogma.

The other tendency is to oversimplify to the point of incoherence. The Gospels offer us an opportunity to overcome this whenever we encounter the Lord doing something both profoundly human and at the same time perfectly revelatory of his divinity. We see this via John 19:25-27.

John's Gospel paints a stark and poignant scene: from the cross, Jesus looks out upon a small band of friends amid a sea of enemies and gawking onlookers. Among those friends standing close by are two figures, “his mother” and “the disciple whom he loved”. These characterisations exclusively denote relationships to Christ. The woman is not “Mary” but “his mother.” The young man is not “John” but “the disciple”.

Consequential

Then, at that most consequential hour of human and cosmic history, Jesus, the God-man, does something profoundly human and altogether mysterious at once. He says to his mother, “woman, behold your son”.

As the last act of an only child, there could be nothing more practical than ensuring the welfare of his widowed mother. In fact, this scene provides excellent verification of the theological truth of Mary's status as “ever-Virgin Mother of God”. After all, any children of Mary would have automatically taken on the responsibilities of caring for her. That fact that she herself has no children (notwithstanding one's opinion about the “cousins” or “half-siblings” of Jesus) is precisely the reason why someone must be designated to “adopt” her and thus provider for her care.

John is told to do just this when Jesus says, “behold,

your mother”. Here we peer deeper into the mystery: the human necessity of finding a home for his mother is at the same time the spiritual be-gifting of Mary to the world, as Mother to the Church.

Divinity

Every act of Christ's earthly life is the act of a divinity who possesses an integral human nature. For this reason, paradoxically, the most deeply human actions of Jesus' life – eating, weeping, praying, turning over tables, dying – also show most clearly who God is. The mutual adoption of his mother and the beloved disciple represents just one more example of this phenomenon: God sees to every detail, and we can trust in this.

Immediately after this, John's Gospel tells us that Jesus was “aware that everything was now finished”. On a human level, his mother has a home. From the perspective of eternity, everything she embodies has been received by John on behalf of disciples of all ages. The last unfinished business has been accomplished.

“From that hour, the disciple took her into his home.” The Greek rendered as “his home” is *ta idia*. Its first appearance in John's Gospel is in the great prologue: “He came to what was his own (*“ta idia”*), but his own people (*“oi idioi”*) did not accept him.” In taking Mary into his care, John does what those who sent Christ to the cross did not: he accepted Jesus' identity as God-with-us and Word made flesh.

As the prologue continues, “to those who did accept him, he gave power to become children of God”. The beloved disciple, in other words, is each one of us, or what each one of us are called to be: a beloved disciple of Jesus, rendered by grace a child of God who then accepts Jesus' mother into his home.

As the usages of *ta idia* indicate, “his home” is more than a physical space: it is his life, his own heart. He accepts the mystery of who she is as *Theotokos* and does so on behalf of all of us.

Just as Eve became the mother of all the living, so the new Eve – through this divine-human act of entrustment – is forever the mother of all who live in Christ, who acknowledge her son as saviour of the world.

❗ Father Eric Banecker is a priest in the US, serving as pastor of St Francis de Sales Parish in Philadelphia.



Synod and family: the communication skills are the same



Gretchen Crowe

For almost two years, the Church has been actively engaged in a process of listening and discernment. Maybe you participated in synod conversations at your parish, maybe you didn't. Maybe you chatted about topics with friends or colleagues, maybe you didn't. But very soon, this Synod on Synodality, which opened October 18, 2021, will enter its next phase: a gathering at the Vatican that uniquely brings together clergy and laity to continue, well, being synodal.

"The Synod is about dialogue: among the baptised, among members of the Church, on the life of the Church, on dialogue with the world, on the problems that affect humanity today," Pope Francis said in a press conference September 4.

Working document

In preparation for this dialogue scheduled for October 4-29, an *Instrumentum Laboris* (IL), or working document, was released this past summer as a starting point for the conversation, as is customary before synod gatherings.

"The IL is not a document of the Holy See, but of the whole Church," Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary general of

the General Secretariat of the Synod, said when the document was first released. "It is not a document written at a desk. It is a document in which all are co-authors, each for the part he or she is called to play in the Church, in docility to the Spirit. ... You will not find in the text a theoretical systematic explanation of synodality, but the fruit of a Church experience, of a journey in which we have all learnt more by walking together and questioning ourselves on the meaning of this experience."

Worksheets within the IL will serve as discussion prompts for synod delegates, with the invocation of the Holy Spirit, on all manner of topics affecting the life of the Church today. Even with limited media access, it is sure to be an interesting few weeks.

What's especially interesting to me as a communicator is that, at its core, this synod demands good communications skills of its participants. They must know when to speak and when not to speak. They must understand how to make a point or observation effectively and concisely. They must listen with empathy and respect. They must be polite, yet truthful. They must be in the moment completely, not planning one's response in the midst of another's intervention. These are the skills needed for fruitful conversations and communication – for synodality to fulfil its potential.

Family synodality

It's very similar to how we ought to function in a family, isn't it? Love demands willing the good of the other, not of one's self – and that means we must

be more interested in what the other person has to say than in that excellent point that we, ourselves, must get across.

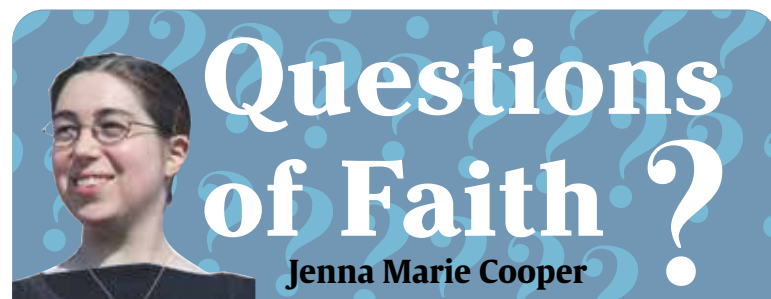
"In the family, we learn to embrace and support one another, to discern the meaning of facial expressions and moments of silence, to laugh and cry together with people who did not choose one other yet are so important to each other," said Pope Francis in his message for the 49th World Communications Day in 2015, one of my favourites of his. "This greatly helps us to understand the meaning of communication as recognising and creating closeness. When we lessen distances by growing closer and accepting one another, we experience gratitude and joy."

Of course, we are not always great at good communication – in our homes, in our society, in our Church. We are not always good at assuming the best of those who are speaking to us, or of being truly open to what another has to say. But this is how bridges are built, and this is how communion is achieved.

As synod delegates convene in Rome for the month of October, they have a unique opportunity to model and exercise excellent communication. They have the opportunity to, as the Rule of St Benedict dictates, "listen with the ear of the heart".

Please join me in praying not only for the effective discernment of the will of God for the Church, but for truly excellent communication among all who represent her next month.

i Gretchen Crowe is editor-in-chief of OSV News.



Are 'little white lies' okay to tell?

Q: Is it always wrong in every case to lie? What about the so-called 'little white lie'? I'm thinking of situations where you tell a person something you know is false to spare their feelings, when they're likely never going to know the truth anyway.

A: Our Catholic Faith teaches us that lying is an offense against the eighth commandment and is in principle always wrong. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "By its very nature, lying is to be condemned. It is a profanation of speech, whereas the purpose of speech is to communicate known truth to others. The deliberate intention of leading a neighbour into error by saying things contrary to the truth constitutes a failure in justice and charity" (CCC 2485).

However, as your question suggests, there are some nuances to consider. For one thing, a lie might be mortally or venially sinful depending on the objective importance of the truth being obscured and on the seriousness of the potential harms that might come about because of the lie. A quick fib about eating the last piece of cake is obviously not on the same level as a lie in a business transaction that causes a family to lose their entire savings.

It also might be useful to consider what a lie technically is. As the catechism, referencing St Augustine, puts it: "A lie consists in speaking a falsehood with the intention of deceiving" (CCC 2482). This means that not every untrue statement is a lie. To give some examples, acting and some jokes involve saying things that aren't true, but untruths uttered by an actor in a play or as part of the set-up for a clear punchline aren't intended to deceive and typically aren't misleading in actual fact. Likewise, inaccurate statements that come about from an honest mistake also are not

lies, because there was no intention in such statements to distort the truth.

The catechism further specifies that: "To lie is to speak or act against the truth in order to lead into error someone who has the right to know the truth" (CCC 2483). It should be noted that not everyone has the right to know the truth about every situation. In most cases it is not at all sinful to give an intentionally vague answer to a question that isn't the proper business of the one asking. For example, if a nosy coworker asks about a recent doctor's appointment you had, you have no obligation to share the details of your medical condition. "I'm fine, thanks," and a fast change of subject is morally licit.

Similarly, since we live in society and must be sensitive to the feelings of others, we don't always need to be brutally honest and outspoken in all our thoughts and opinions. So, it's fine – and even at times required by charity – to answer certain questions with diplomacy and tact, as long as we're not saying anything radically untrue in doing so.

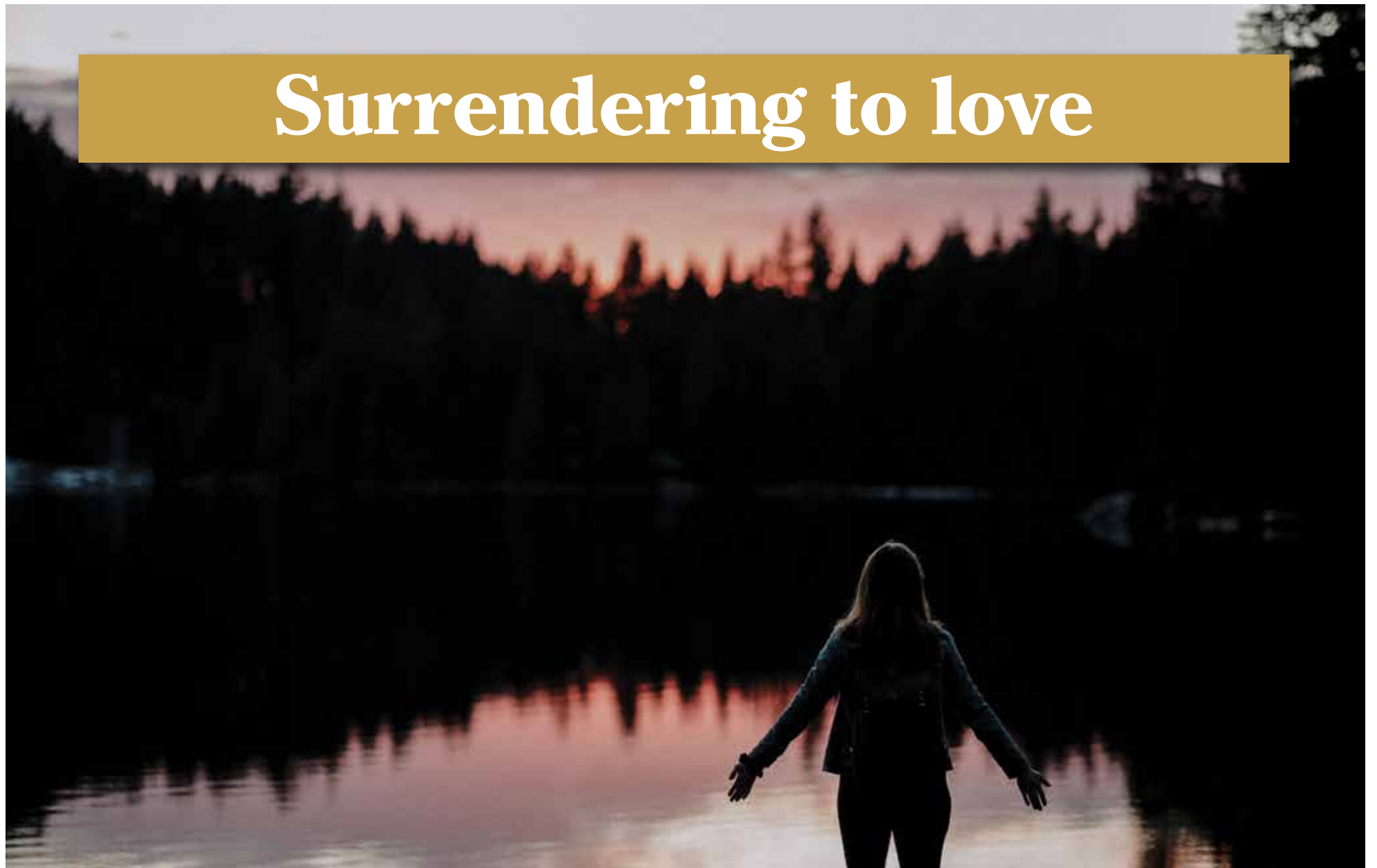
With 'little white lies,' I think a lot depends on the specific context, and whether the 'white lie' involves stating a literal untruth. Refraining from telling a sick person that they look terrible is not a lie, because staying silent in a scenario where you had no need or obligation to comment is not inherently untruthful. Saying a bride is beautiful on her wedding day – even if you secretly think she's rather average-looking – is also not really a lie, since beauty is in the eye of the beholder and can encompass elements beyond physical appearance.

Personally, I'm against telling white lies that are clear-cut falsehoods, even if they only concern trivial matters. Beyond the question of whether this is a sin, telling even small lies can cause people to lose their trust in us over time.

i Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News.



Surrendering to love



Perhaps all of Jesus' invitations to us can be summarised in one word, surrender. We need to surrender to love.

But why is that difficult? Shouldn't it be the most natural thing in the world? Isn't our deepest desire a longing to find love and surrender to it?

True, our deepest longing is to surrender to love, but we have some deep innate resistances to give ourselves over in surrender. Here are a couple of examples:

At the Last Supper in John's Gospel when Jesus tries to wash Peter's feet, he meets a stiff resistance from Peter – Never! I will never let you wash my feet! What's ironic here is that, perhaps more than anything else, Peter yearned precisely for that kind of intimacy with Jesus. Yet, when it's offered, he resists.

Popularity

Another example might be seen in the struggles of Henri Nouwen. Nouwen, one of the most gifted spiritual writers of our generation, enjoyed immense popularity. He published more than 50 books, was a much sought-after professor (tenured at both Harvard and Yale), received invitations daily to give talks and lectures around the world, and had many close friends. And yet, inside all that popularity and adulation, surrounded by many friends who loved him, he was unable to let that love give him any real sense of being loved or of being lovable. Instead, through most of his life he laboured inside



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

a deep anxiety which had him believe that he wasn't lovable. On occasion this even landed him in clinical depression. And so, through most of his adult life, surrounded by so much love, he was haunted by a sense that he wasn't loved, nor worthy of being loved. Moreover, he was a deeply sensitive person who more than anything else wanted to surrender to love. What held him back?

In his own words, he was crippled by a deep wound he couldn't quite name and whose grip he couldn't shake. This was true for most of his adult life. Eventually, he was able to free himself from his deep wound and surrender to love. However, it took a traumatic death experience for that to happen. Standing too

close to the highway at a bus-stop one morning, he was struck by the mirror of a passing van which sent him flying. Rushed to a hospital, for some hours he hovered between life and death. While in that state, he had a very deep experience of God's love for him. He returned to full consciousness and normal life as a profoundly changed man. Now, after experiencing God's love for him, he could finally also surrender to human love in a way he had been incapable of previous to his "death" experience. All his subsequent books are marked by this conversion in love.

Why do we fight love? Why don't we surrender more easily? The reasons are unique to each of us. Sometimes we are dealing with a deep

wound that leaves us feeling unlovable. But sometimes our resistance has less to do with any wound than it has to do with how we are unconsciously fighting the very love we so painfully seek. Sometimes, like Jacob in the Bible, we are unconsciously wrestling with God (who is Love) and consequently unconsciously fighting love.

Realisation

In the Bible story where Jacob wrestles all night with a man, we see that in this struggle he has no idea that he is wrestling with God and with love. In his mind, he is wrestling with a foe he needs to conquer. Eventually, when the darkness of the night gives way to more light, he sees what he is wrestling with – and it is a surprise and shock to him. He realises he is fighting love itself. With that realisation, he gives up struggling and instead clings to the very force he had been previously fighting, with the plea: "I will not let you go, until you bless me!" This is the final lesson we need to

learn in love: We wrestle for love with every talent, cunning, and strength inside us. Eventually, if we are fortunate, we have an awakening. Some light, often a crippling defeat, shows us the true face of what we have been wrestling with and we realise that it's not something to be conquered, but it's the very love to which we have been longing to surrender.

For many of us, this will be the great awakening in our lives, a waking up to the fact that in all our ambitions and schemes to show the world how worthwhile and lovable we are, we are in unconscious ways fighting the very love to which we ultimately want to surrender. And, usually, as with Jacob in the biblical story, it will take the defeat of our own strength and a permanent limp before we realise what we are fighting against is really that to which we most want to surrender.

And this is surrender, not resignation, something we give ourselves over to rather than something that defeats us.

“For many of us, this will be the great awakening in our lives, a waking up to the fact that in all our ambitions and schemes to show the world how worthwhile and lovable we are, we are in unconscious ways fighting the very love to which we ultimately want to surrender”

It isn't too late to change for the better



Ez 18:25-28
Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9
Phil 2:1-11
Phil 2:1-5 (alternate)
Mt 21:28-32

This Sunday's Gospel offers us an idea a lot of us need to hear: "It's not too late. Any of us, if we choose, can follow another path."

Telling the story of two sons who made two different choices, Jesus essentially told the chief priests and elders: If you think you have it figured out, think again. Take another look at what you think is important. And consider following another path.

We can change our minds – and change our hearts.

"Change," in fact, is a significant word in this Gospel. It pops up twice:

The Sunday Gospel

Deacon
Greg
Kandra



describing the son who does change, and describing the chief priests and elders who don't.

Some commentators have compared this passage in Matthew to the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke; both stories revolve around two sons, and a choice and a change.

It is clearly a theme that Jesus wanted to drive home again and again to his listeners. It is one that has echoed down through history as the Christian faith has been passed on: the notion that there is another way, a better way – the Father's way. The Father's

will.

He is calling. What does he want? Among other things, he wants us to be open to the possibility of change.

St John Henry Newman – himself a Catholic convert, with a profound understanding of what it means to choose another path – put it this way: "To live is to change," he wrote. "And to be perfect is to have changed often."

Extraordinary

And each of us, he wrote elsewhere, has been called by God to something extraordinary – to live out his will for our lives. "God has created me to do him some definite service," he wrote. "He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another...I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection

between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do his work."

It isn't always easy. But if we listen to what God is trying to tell us, follow the direction he's trying to take us and trust in his will for our lives, we may be amazed at where he leads us. Countless saints and holy people – from Ignatius to Francis of Assisi to Dorothy Day – give testimony to that.

But what about us? Are we open to change, ourselves? Are we open to changing ourselves? Are we open to God's work in our lives?

This Sunday's Gospel is nothing less than a call to continuing conversion. It asks us to reconsider the choices we have made.

If we haven't taken our faith seriously, to take another look.

If we've thought, "I go to Mass now and then, that's enough," to think again.

Consider

If we think we're fine the way we are, and don't need to do better, to consider that maybe we need to listen more closely to what God really wants.

The passage from Exodus puts it bluntly: "Turn away from wickedness." And if we need some guidance on how to do that, St Paul offers a good place to start, the first steps toward holiness: "Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory," he writes, "rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others".

Ultimately, this Gospel calls on us to be people who give more than lip service to

God (and, by extension, our neighbour); it challenges us to live as we are called to live, and not say one thing while doing another.

God is calling us, inviting us – just like the father did with the two sons. He is asking us to labour in the vineyard, to do his work in the world and live according to his will, not ours.

This Scripture reminds us of something we might easily forget. Like the son who changed his mind, we can reverse course, and go another way.

Want to change direction? Follow the signs toward the vineyard. It's not too late!

i Deacon Greg Kandra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog, "The Deacon's Bench."

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Too much insult and not enough insight to berate bogeymen

Judging by the video footage, those protests outside Leinster House last week were intimidating and offensive. Yet sneering at the protestors only increases the alienation that gives fuel to these activities.

The matter was debated widely, but an item on the **Hard Shoulder** (Newstalk, Thursday) captured the essence of it. Presenter Kieran Cuddihy's opening comments weren't particularly helpful - too much insult and not enough insight as he berated the bogeyman of the far-right. I do believe that there's a core that's dangerous but as one texter pointed out a lot get drawn in because they feel alienated and left behind by those with power and influence in society. I thought the presenter became more moderate and nuanced as the show went on - maybe he was influenced by his guest, journalist Razan Ibraheem, who said she'd listen to everybody, but that violence and intimidation crosses a red line. David Davin-Power, formerly a reporter with RTÉ, was moderate and nuanced. He was strongly critical of the protests at Leinster House, wondered about the level of policing of the event, but suggested that it was the 'hard



Newstalk's Kieran Cuddihy.

left' that had pioneered this "trapping" of politicians, e.g. during the water protests. Union activist Brendan Ogle said he wasn't far-left, taking swipes at conservative senators and accusing them (without evidence!) of "pandering" to the protestors - but Mr Cuddihy defended them as they weren't present to do it themselves.

Earlier that day on **Lunchtime Live** (Newstalk) there was some rebalancing. Earlier in the week there had been a pro-euthanasia item on the show, and then on

the Thursday we heard contributions from people that were against it. One lady had personal experience of the issue and spoke movingly of caring for a family member. As usual Peadar Tóibín spoke eloquently against euthanasia, convinced, based on the experience of other countries, that restrictions couldn't be maintained once the line was crossed where it became OK for people to be deliberately killed. He reckoned that older people would begin to feel that they were a burden when this

practice became available. He pointed out how palliative care doctors were against it, and pointed to figures that suggested that suicide of the usual tragic variety became more common in countries that legalised euthanasia - which seems predictable. I have admired writer Valerie Cox in other contexts, and so was disappointed to hear her defending some forms of the practice. She believed that it could be regulated carefully, pointing to countries that had tightened up their laws after it went too far.

There were echoes of both lawlessness and right to life issues in **The Way We Were** (RTÉ One, Wednesday). This was yet another of these retrospective shows, but for me some of it was too much like the allegedly mature modern Ireland looking back disdainfully at our supposedly simple past. I prefer *Reeling in the Years* where we get the past, warts and all, but without the ironic commentary. I'm not a fan of the modern trend to have comedians commenting on everything. Maybe it's the court jester thing, but I find a lot of them just trying to be funny rather than actually being funny.

This episode was about law and order. I was always proud of how we created a largely

PICK OF THE WEEK

CATHOLIC SPHERE

EWTN Monday October 2, 8am
and Tuesday October 3, 9.30pm

How to talk to your children about human sexuality, with a panel of experts.

SELMA

BBC Two Monday October 2, 11.15pm

Biopic chronicling the three-month period in 1965 which saw Dr Martin Luther King Jr lead a turbulent march from Selma to Montgomery in a bid to secure equal voting rights.

THE SIMPSONS

RTÉ Two Tuesday October 3, 4.30pm

Pulpit Friction: Homer is recruited to be a church deacon by the trendy new reverend (Edward Norton) - but Bart is not impressed when he starts to embrace the faith a little too seriously.

unarmed police force considering the history, and proud that we abandoned the death penalty. Shots of a hanging room convinced me of that. But we've since abandoned a consistent respect-for-life ethic. One of the grimmest aspects of the programme was the story of the increase in drug abuse and the related creation of ruthless gangs. Our Garda Síochána also had to deal with terrible situations during The Troubles, and we had the familiar footage of high-profile kidnappings and the sad stories of garda lives lost in the course of their duties.

The script told us that in

the 20th Century children were "let down by our legal system", and we heard about "the beating of children in our schools" (accompanied by a shot featuring a priest or religious brother). Thankfully we've left corporal punishment behind, but we've replaced it with worse. In the 21st Century we've taken away children's right to be born, the State has facilitated the death of around 8,000 living unborn children per year and the State bodies fail children on a regular basis.

So let's not get too smug about how enlightened we've become.

Film

Aubrey Malone



Uplifting tale of resistance to immigrant integration

Somebody should put up a statue of Ken Loach. For decades he's been making great movies about little guys taking on the big institutions. In *The Old Oak* (15A) the enemy isn't a conglomerate but a man's own contemporaries.

Refugees

TJ Ballantine (Dave Turner) is the proprietor of the eponymous pub, a run-down establishment he's trying to keep going on a shoestring in post-Thatcher, post-Scargill Britain.

When he opens a back room as a community centre for a group of Syrian refugees who've recently arrived

in his town, he alienates a racist crew of regular customers who've been drinking there all their lives.

They want to hold an anti-immigrant meeting in the room. Now they see it as being stolen from them.

TJ has had his share of problems. His wife left him. His son won't talk to him. He's put to the pin of his collar trying to make ends meet in a hardscrabble environment. There have been times when he's lost the will to live.

He forms a friendship with one of the immigrants, a photographer called Yara (Elba Mari). After her camera is broken by a thug, TJ gets it repaired for her. He

empathises with her predicament. She's come from the devastation of a war zone. She doesn't even know if her father is alive.

Mr Loach pits their mutual pain against the ignorance of the xenophobic drinkers who resent TJ's 'Good Samaritan' side.

Charity

The film isn't naive. Mr Loach gives us both sides of the coin, showing sympathy for those who feel too many gratuities are given to immigrants at the expense of hard-working locals. As one of them puts it, "Charity begins at home".

Will TJ crumble under the increasing pressure

that's being brought to bear on him? Two dramatic incidents (which I won't reveal) threaten to break his spirit. We wonder if Yara's friendship will sustain him sufficiently for him to be able to go on.

This is ultimately a film about renewal, about 'the faith to hope'. A subplot involves the reformation of another character, Charlie. His journey is more nuanced than TJ's and therefore more interesting in its way.

Deeply felt

The Old Oak is a deeply-felt work. The theme is as relevant to this country as it is to the 'Geordie' area of Britain where it's set. It drips with



naturalism. Such naturalism, be warned, comes replete with a fair old dose of "salty" language.

The actors all have lived-in faces. They don't look like actors. Mr Loach seems to handpick his casts 'from the streets' to give them their air of authenticity.

He doesn't wear his heart on his sleeve. That doesn't mean he hasn't got a big one. *The Old Oak* confirms his status at the front rank of directors who matter.

Now 87, he's one of Britain's national treasures, an old-fashioned liberal who's come up trumps once again with a poignant parable about a gentle giant slouching towards survival. It would be a fitting swansong.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Francis followed papal emissaries to Mongolia 500 years later

Peter Costello

The visit of Pope Francis to Mongolia elicited some curious reactions, which show that many people are far from appreciating the role of Mongolia, not only in medieval history, but also nowadays and the place in today's world the country's government is attempting to build.

It was pointed out that there were only about 1,450 Catholics in the country, why bother with them? This shows a sad lack of understanding of why Jesus himself in the gospels speaks about searching out the lost sheep of the flock. Isolated in the middle of continental Asia we can be sure these handful of Christians were most appreciative.

Interest

But papal interest in Mongolia is nothing new in any case. Pope Francis was merely following half a millennium later a series of papal emissaries in the 13th Century, one of whom was appointed the first archbishop of Peking (today's Beijing).

The travels of the Venetian merchant Marco Polo with his father and uncle who set out in 1259 for the East, only returning in

1292, are famous. Polo's description of the world as he had seen it then is one of the great books of our culture, so calm in its narration of strange peoples and exotic places that it can completely capture the imagination if read at an early enough age.

“Mongolia and the Mongols had once been of great importance to the Vatican, facing as they did the spreading conquests of Islam, and it might well be again in the near future”

Polo is famous. But he was the essential businessman. Less well known, were the missionaries sent into Asia by Rome on either side of his travels, men whose achievements are hardly known at all these days.

These contemporaries of Marco Polo were William of Rubruck (1253-1255), John of Pian de Carpini (1245-1247), and Friar Oderic of Pordenone (1318-1330).



Pope Francis blesses Tsetsege in a ger on the grounds of Sts Peter and Paul Cathedral in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, September 2. The Mongolian woman, who uses only one name, found a statue of Mary in a garbage landfill and gave it to missionaries; it is now venerated in the cathedral as Our Lady of Heaven. Photo: CNS.

On some of his travels Friar Oderic was accompanied by another friar, one of our own, an Irishman called in the records James of Ireland, who was with him when he died in Udine in Italy in 1331. The pair

visited Mongolia itself and may even have penetrated the mysterious religious city of Lhasa.

Advised

In speaking about the medieval Mongols when

he was in Ulan Bator, Pope Francis, well advised by his staff, would have had these men of religion in mind. Mongolia and the Mongols had once been of great importance to the Vatican, facing as they did the spreading conquests of Islam, and it might well be again in the near future.

“There is a moral example in those other aspiring empires, that empires rise, flourish and fail”

The Pope was welcomed as an important personality of influence from the West. Mongolia, though no longer an imperial power itself, is surrounded by other empires and those who aspire to create them. To the North there is the empire of President Putin, who as a tyrant is quite the equal of those to be found anywhere in the Middle Ages. To the south is China, who by holding what geographers call 'Inner Mongolia', would have an ancient claim in their eyes

to dominion over Greater Mongolia, though that has long been an independent state.

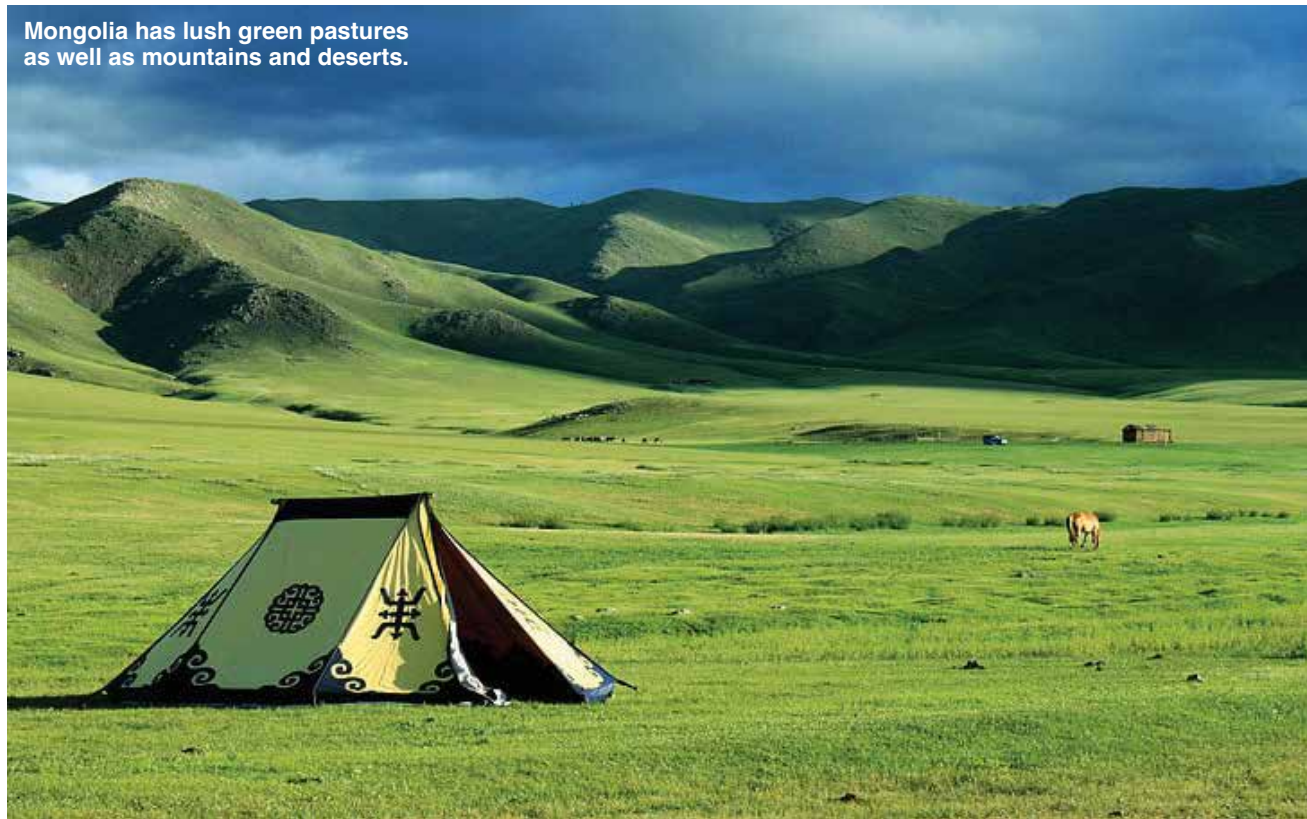
To the west though are various Muslim states to which the current ruler of Turkey sees an historic attachment in a world leadership role. And the Mongols are Buddhists who are tolerant of other faiths in ways not so common among their neighbours.

Mongols

The Mongols once ruled an empire that stretched from the Pacific ocean to the borders of Europe itself. But it rose, flourished, and declined. There is a moral example in those other aspiring empires, that empires rise, flourish and fail.

This is a lesson that Britain has learned. China and Russia too learned it in the past, but have forgotten the lesson. So in offering friendship to Mongolia the Pope was thinking of the rise and fall of those other empires. The Vatican takes a long view of history.

Mongolia has lush green pastures as well as mountains and deserts.



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O'Casey's Dublin trilogy: the Druid production of his three plays set in the Irish revolution

Felix M. Larkin

Sean O'Casey's Dublin trilogy – *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Junó and the Paycock* (1924) and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) – was the first effort at demythologising the Irish revolution in the public sphere. As Conor Cruise O'Brien wrote, these plays “are not revolutionary, and are even counter-revolutionary in their implications and impact in the theatre, and his [O'Casey's] revolutionary rhetoric is generally poppycock”.

The initial impact of the plays – in particular, of *The Plough and the Stars* which is set before and during the 1916 Rising – was electric, and *The Plough* famously provoked a riot in the Abbey Theatre. Yeats responded to the riot with his famous denunciation of the protesters from the stage of the theatre: “You have disgraced yourselves again”.

Druid

It is perhaps appropriate that the acclaimed Druid theatre company has decided to stage these three plays together at the close of the ‘Decade of Centenaries’. Indeed, one can actually see all three on the same day – as I did recently, at the Abbey Theatre where they were first performed in the 1920s.

Seeing them now allows us to adjust our perspective on the Irish revolution after the centenary commemorations, just as the original productions sounded a critical note so soon after the actual events.

The plays are a blend of

humour, satire and tragedy – and the difficult, even implausible, transition from humour and satire into tragedy is skilfully achieved in all three plays. Nevertheless, their impact today is muted by the fact that we are less in thrall to the romantic notion of the Irish revolution than earlier audiences.

“One of the core principles guiding the programme was ‘not to forget the bloodshed and the deep antagonisms of these years’”

The advance in historical scholarship since the 1960s – so-called revisionism – has rescued the revolution from patriotic oversimplification and hero worship. Thus the Decade of Centenaries programme of commemorations was nuanced in ways that O'Casey could not have imagined – with an emphasis on reconciliation, inclusiveness and historical authenticity. One of the core principles guiding the programme was “not to forget the bloodshed and the deep antagonisms of these years [1912-1923]”.

O'Casey's plays remind us of the bloodshed of the revolution and the hardships endured by ordinary people in the course of the revolution. We are also reminded – in *The Shadow of a Gunman* especially – of the “sneaking regards”, those who admire and give support and succour to gunmen at



Druid poster for an earlier production of *The Silver Tassie*.

a safe distance from the bloodshed and the hardships.

Bloodshed

That we still need to be reminded of the bloodshed and the hardships was evidenced by the spectacle of hordes of young people chanting “Ooh, ah, up the RA” with the Wolfe Tones at the Electric Picnic festival this year – another instance of disgracing ourselves again.

Our collective memories of life in the shadow of gunmen are all too short, apparently incapable of stretching back 100 years to the Irish revolution or even 25 years to before the Good Friday Agreement.

Bravo to Druid for staging O'Casey's Dublin trilogy at this time. A shout-out, too, to An Post who earlier this year issued three beautiful stamps to mark the centenary of the plays, one stamp for each of the plays.

But what would O'Casey himself have wanted?

A comment by Peter Costello

Faced with an opportunity to see his set of plays about the Irish revolution performed as part of the decade of Remembrance, what would O'Casey have wanted?

He was always glad, at least on most occasions, to see his dramas performed, but these plays about revolution and war and the ruination they cause were not in his mind a trilogy, but a teratology (for which he had a good model in the history plays of Shakespeare).

The fourth play of the set was *The Silver Tassie*, which in counterpoint dealt with Dubliners' experience of the Great War.

Yeats and the Abbey management rejected the play. O'Casey, Yeats suggested, had first hand experience of the revolutionary years in Dublin; but the trenches of the Western Front were not in his experience.

To this O'Casey would have said that he had personal knowledge of what the experience of the war did to the lives and minds of young Dubliners because he had seen the results among the

men of the North side. He saw the play as absolutely essential to the truest and deepest understanding of the damage done the psyche Europe by the Great War.

Yeats' view was widely shared. Already Ireland wished to believe that the Somme was not their battle (though it was clearly Belfast's). Indeed that view is still very much alive in the country still.

While the series produced by the Druid deserves the praises heaped upon it, and will be further praised when it opens in the US next month, the production could have been the occasion at long last to do full justice to what O'Casey wanted.

Indeed Druid have produced the play on its own in the past. Why not now, as part of the set? Can we really praise his vision and insight, while continuing to reject one quarter of it?

This is a question that the more mature Ireland of the future will answer. But for now at this time of commemoration of lost lives *The Silver Tassie* is not to be seen.

Words of wisdom for the modern day



Benedict absorbed in work in his study.

With God You are Never Alone: The Great Papal Addresses,

by Benedict XVI
(Bloomsbury, £14.95 / €17.50)

Peter Costello

In this book, which is bound to secure a wide readership, the 10 most important speeches of the Pontificate of Benedict XVI, are collected by Fr Federico Lombardi, of the Ratzinger-Benedict Foundation in Rome.

These speeches reveal the outlook, the scholarship, and the human warmth of Pope Benedict on a variety of important occasions. They will be read, in some cases reread, with great interest and attention.

In the promotion of the book, Fr Lombardi makes an important comment. “Dubbed and dismissed by many as an unrepentant traditionalist, we now see a man of profound intelligence and wisdom on matters relating not to just to religion but on what is now termed ‘The Common Good’.

“It is thus more important than ever to read these texts carefully and with measure and not in garbled versions dreamt up by the press. With this in mind, Benedict will be seen as an inspiring thinker who has a lot to teach us now and in the future.”

This will give some pause for thought. These are addresses, texts prepared not to be read but to be listened to. What is heard cannot be studied carefully, the words must act directly and at once. There is a difference between a thesis and sermon.

I suspect that this failure to understand the nature of an oral address that gave rise to the public confusions and debates that so dismayed Pope Benedict, by character a reserved and scholarly man.

Take for instance the address in which he made known his decision to resign the papacy.

This was announced to an audience in Latin. In the film of the occasion one can see

the slow wave of reaction, for clearly the majority were unable to grasp as he spoke the nature of what he was saying.

But then the realisation began to ripple though the assembled ranks. He ended leaving in the minds of many who heard him, both clergy and press great confusion of mind.

The ‘versions’ were not really dreamt up by the press in a malicious way. The Papal staff had not prepared the group for the announcement, nothing was issued to shape the world's reaction.

The same was true of the Regensburg address which was very quickly fanned by the media, written and visual, into an anti-Muslim attack, which it was very far from being. Benedict was clearly unprepared for this.

There was nothing, to his teacher's mind extraordinary about what he was saying. But without a text already in hand his audience were left confused. If he had been speaking to an audience of university students there would have been no media eruptions. But what he said all too easily, and quite contrary to his intentions, played into the hands of Islamic critics of Rome.

But following Lombardi's injunction a careful reading of the pope's words does indeed reveal an extraordinary man, with a very clear lines of thought. Even all his years working with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, seems not have laid the groundwork for a public style.

This was the world's loss. For in an atmosphere of calm consideration, he emerges for what he was, a good, kindly minded man sensitive to the moods of faith and the varied experiences of God, in fact a holy man. But not perhaps a man for the conflict of today's media with its almost immediate grasp at a hint of conflict.

His life's work as an academic will come to be seen as great intellectual resource. But which will be read and absorbed in hours of quieter reflection as their author intended.



A scene from the present Druid production of O'Casey.

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HEAVEN'S MESSAGE

IRELAND is mentioned in 17th June message to Luz de Maria de Bonilla. Also Marian Basilica in 7th Aug message. Fr José Mariá Rojas, her spiritual director since 2009. www.revelacionesmarianas.com/english

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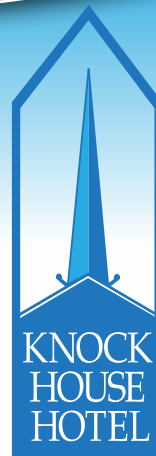
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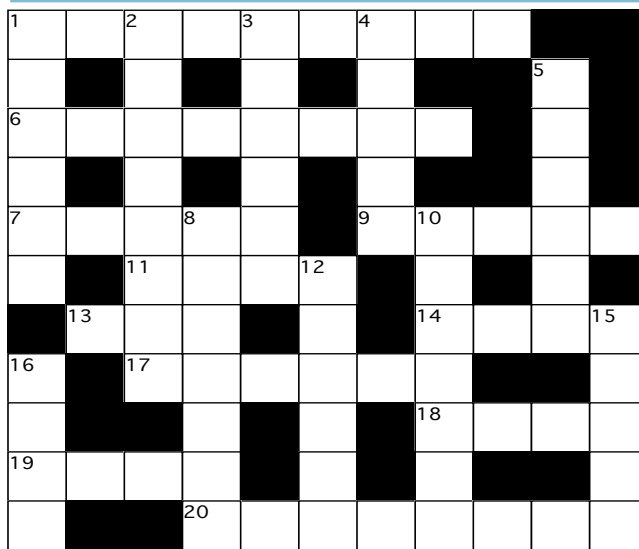
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Crossword Junior

Gordius 502



Across

- 1 Boyle is in this Connacht county (9)
6 Garment with buttons (8)
7 The period when a monarch is ruling (5)
9 It pumps blood around your body (5)
11 Piece of paper money (4)
13 You might put it in your hair (3)
14 Friends (4)
17 Very easy, not complicated (6)
18 Competition of speed (4)
19 Finest (4)
20 It happens when a player scores three goals in a match (3-5)

Down

- 1 Do the best performance ever to break this (6)
2 You'll find these fish packed tightly into a tin (8)
3 Another word for the east (6)
4 Navan and Kells are in this county (5)
5 Cask, keg (6)
8 In the Bible, David killed this giant (7)
10 Ruler over an empire (7)
12 One who is excellent in a particular way (6)
15 A tasty cut of meat (5)
16 Large brass musical instrument (4)

SOLUTIONS, SEPTEMBER 21

GORDIUS NO. 629

Across - 1 Medication 6 Wait 10 Lathe 11 Melbourne 12 Trample
15 Tweed 17 Nori 18 Rues 19 Fibre 21 Oak leaf 23 Voted 25
Yawn 26 Newts 28 Dead end 33 Inspector 34 Blaze 35 Less
36 Experiment

Down - 1 Milk 2 Detergent 3 Cream 4 Tamil Nadu 5 Only 7 Agree
8 Tweedledum 9 Pontiff 13 Puma 14 England 16 Provincial 20
Brainwave 21 Odyssey 22 Aqua 27 Wasps 29 Eyrie 30 Dubai
31 Styx 32 Kept

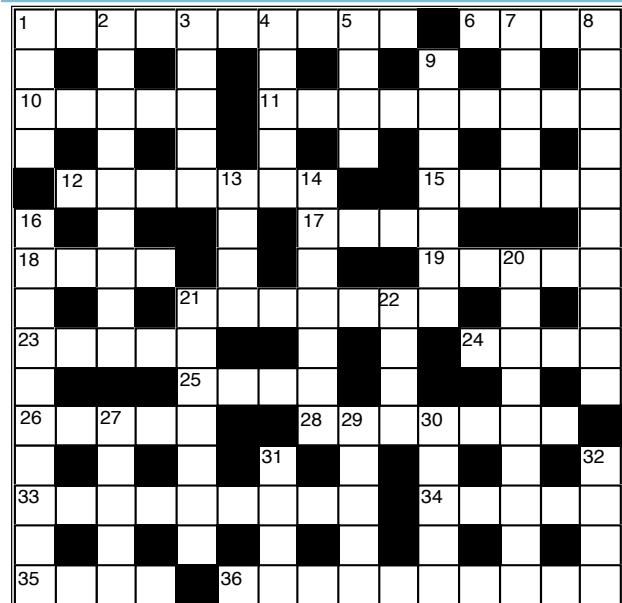
CHILDREN'S No. 501

Across - 1 Sheepdog 6 Par 7 America 8 Nappy 9 Ingot 10 Cellar
13 Hands 15 Picture 16 Spy 18 Altar 19 Battle

Down - 1 Spanish 2 Emergency 3 Paint 4 Orange 5 Prayer 6
Pupil 11 Little 12 Abroad 14 Spill 17 Pea

Crossword

Gordius 630



Across

- 1 On a lower level within a building (10)
6 Stepped (4)
10 & 11a A mound and defensive structure, the forerunner to a castle (5,3,6)
12 Less stable, more unsteady (7)
15 & 23a From the Latin, solid ground (5,5)
17 Volcano in Sicily (4)
18 Rant, go crazy (4)
19 Presented oneself again for an examination (5)
21 Retribution (7)
23 See 15 across
24 Blood vessel (4)
25 Oriental pans (4)
26 Stiff, inflexible (5)
28 One part of a story; an incident (7)
33 Uncivilised person, or a member of a famous rugby team (9)
34 Shade of blue (5)
35 Pitcher, water jug (4)
36 Part of a cathedral or church facilitating devotion to the Blessed Virgin (4,6)

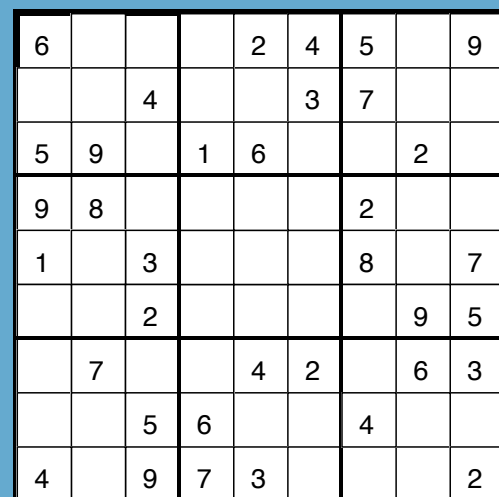
Down

- 1 American ten-cent coin (4)
2 Keep a protective eye on (5,4)
3 & 9d French dish of raw meat (5,7)
4 Astound (5)
5 Travelled on horseback (4)
7 Monarch or dictator (5)
8 James Bond's drink of choice (3,7)
9 See 3 down
13 Doing nothing (4)
14 Drive a vehicle backwards (7)
16 More suitable or desirable (10)
20 'Sleeping policeman' (5,4)
21 Unfair treatment - when the cards you're given are uncooked? (3,4)
22 Asian desert (4)
27 Furze or whin (5)
29 Type of flower (5)
30 Swiping cut (5)
31 Italian city with a famous Leaning Tower (4)
32 Tumbled (4)

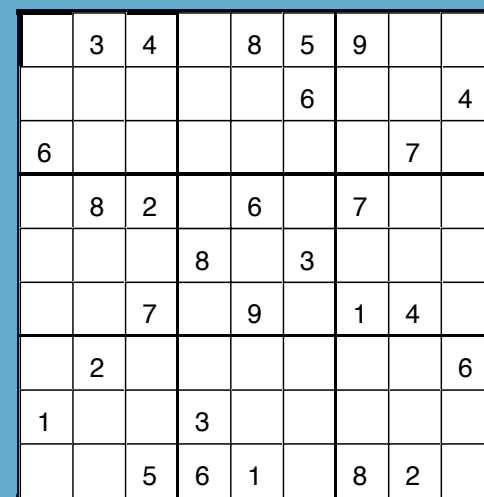
Sudoku Corner

502

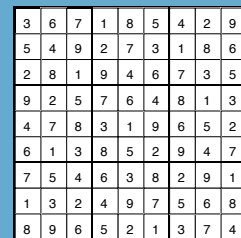
Easy



Hard



Last week's Easy 501



Last week's Hard 501



Guard against ‘hierarchy of grief’ after tragedies

After 37 years as a priest, I realise there is one area of my life and ministry where I could be diagnosed with scruples. This scrupulosity occurs when it comes to what priest and parish have to offer and ensuring that every family and individual gets treated exactly the same. Whether they come to Mass regularly or not at all, pay generously to collections or not a penny, whether they live at the end of a long avenue or in a council cottage, heat their home with an Aga or a Super Ser, they all get the same service. I realise that claim can make me a hostage to fortune, and it can also come across as boastful which it is not meant to be.

Esteem
The one area of parish life where this parity of esteem becomes really important is at the time of a death and funeral. For all priests working in a parish context, funerals are increasingly our principal point of contact with the greatest number of people across the generations. Funeral liturgies present a unique opportunity but also a unique challenge for a priest. In an increasingly secular world families may wish to design a send-off for their loved ones which has more to do with celebrating life than praying for the repose of their



soul. Our Catholic tradition allows for both, but it will probably fall to the priest to ensure that the balance is kept in terms of the choices of music and what part eulogies will play in the liturgy. In my experience this is a bit of a minefield and the fact that different dioceses and parishes have different policies makes it all the more challenging. Sometimes too, families can send you the subtle message that, for various reasons, they deserve special treatment when responding to their requests. The policy of treating everyone equally can have short- and long-term consequences for the priest and even for the parish finances but I still believe it is the right approach.

Road deaths
A rather longwinded introduction to what motivated me to reflect on this subject. Over the summer months we have had so many tragic deaths on our roads and others who have died abroad while on holiday. I know this is a very sensitive issue and I'm certainly not getting into individual cases, but I have a lingering unease about how some of these deaths were treated in the media and by our public representatives. I know that when there are multiple fatalities in one accident then it is a bigger media story, and the sense of national tragedy is heightened. There is also a perception that if the tragedy happens to a particular socio-

economic group or in a particular area of the country then the coverage changes. Beyond media coverage I wonder what criteria is used in Aras an Uachtarain or in the Taoiseach's office before deciding if the President or Taoiseach will attend personally or be represented at funerals?
While I accept there are certain deaths and tragedies that will command greater coverage and attention, in my experience there is no hierarchy of grief for families and loved ones. At every level we need to guard against even the perception that one family's loss and pain is greater or lesser than another.

As children see it....
A little girl was at Mass with her mother when she started to complain that she was feeling unwell. "I think I need to throw up," said the girl. "Well, go outside," the mother replied, "And use the bushes by the front door of the church." The little girl went off but was back less than a minute later. "That was quick," her mother said. "Did you throw up?"
"Yes, but I didn't need to go outside. I used a box near the door that said, 'For the sick'."

Pause for thought
"Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year. He is rich who owns the day, and no one owns the day who allows it to be invaded with fret and anxiety. Finish every day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities, no doubt crept in. Forget them as soon as you can, tomorrow is a new day; begin it well and serenely, with too high a spirit to be cumbered with your old nonsense. This new day is too dear, with its hopes and invitations, to waste a moment on the yesterdays." – Ralph Waldo Emerson





Please help The Little Way to bring clean water to remote villages

Bishop Barthelémy Yaouda has written to The Little Way Association from Cameroon telling us that the far north of his country is the driest and poorest area: "Women and children have to walk miles each day to collect clean water, sometimes making the journey several times a day." The bishop continues: "This has a bad effect on the children's education and is a severe burden for their mothers. Many villages use unsafe water from ponds and poorly-maintained wells for domestic purposes. These waters are teeming with bacteria, parasites and mosquito larvae which are propagators of several waterborne diseases. A well-constructed borewell will improve the health of the whole population. The village of Konkorong has 1,012 inhabitants and its current water point is used for both human and animal use."

The Little Way Association receives many requests for help with the cost of digging borewells to bring clean drinking water to remote villages. Any donation you can send us "for clean water projects" will be forwarded without deduction and will help to make one village's dream, of clean water, a reality.



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